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# Contribution of the South African Forestry Company to sustainable development in the Vhembe district

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# CONTRIBUTION OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN FORESTRY COMPANY TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE VHEMBE DISTRICT

**BY**

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**RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE WITS SCHOOL OF GOVERNANCE IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR A MASTER OF MANAGEMENT DEGREE IN THE FIELD OF PUBLIC AND DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT**

**SUPERVISOR: PROFESSOR THOMAS MOGALE**

**August 2014**

# ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to assess the contribution of the South African Forestry Company Limited (SAFCOL) to sustainable development in the Vhembe District to determine the extent to which local people benefit from its projects. The research methodology employed by the study included a qualitative approach along with purposive sampling, interviews, site visits and observation. Data was collected from senior management, project managers, staff and beneficiaries in relation to the delivery of socio-economic development projects in the Vhembe community.

The study found that while there had been progress in the implementation of projects like beekeeping, establishing nurseries and renovation of schools, other projects such as infrastructure development, venture creation and job creation were less successful. Based on these findings, the study concluded that lack of resources and skills retarded the successful implementation of socio-economic development projects in the Vhembe community.

It was recommended that capacity building and monitoring processes be strengthened to improve SAFCOL's contribution to sustainable development in the Vhembe area.

# DECLARATION

I, Joan Patricia Arrikum, declare that this research report is my own unaided work submitted to the Wits School of Governance for the degree of Master of Management in the Field of Public and Development Management. No part of this research has been submitted in the past, or is being submitted to any other institution or university for any degree or examination. The data in this Report was obtained between November 2013 and January 2014.

**J.P. ARRIKUM** **DATE**

_____ _____

**Student No. 329317**

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I am equally indebted to the management and staff of the Wits School of Governance for their assistance and support when I undertook this research.

I also wish to thank the directorate and staff of SAFCOL for their co-operation and assistance during the data collection process.

# DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my sons Asa, Erwin and David, and to my siblings for their enduring support and encouragement which gave me the strength and inspiration I needed to complete this work.

To my late parents, Ivan and Stella Anthony, thank you for making me realise the value of hard work, commitment and perseverance. I know that you would have been proud of my achievement.

# ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| CBO | Community Based Organisation |
| CCG | Community Care Giver |
| DBSA | Development Bank of Southern Africa |
| DEA | Department of Environmental Affairs |
| ECD | Early Childhood Development |
| HDI | Human Development Index |
| HRDSA | Human Resource Development Strategy for South Africa |
| LED | Local Economic Development |
| MDG | Millennium Development Goal |
| M&E | Monitoring and Evaluation |
| NDP | National Development Plan |
| NFSD | National Framework for Sustainable Development |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organisation |
| NPO | Non-Profit Organisation |
| NSDS | National Skills Development Strategy |
| OVC | Orphans and Vulnerable Children |
| RDP | Reconstruction and Development Programme |
| SAFCOL | South African Forestry Company Limited |
| SD | Sustainable Development |
| SDP | Skills Development Programme |
| SED | Socio-Economic Development |
| SL | Sustainable Livelihood/s |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| UNEP | United Nations Environmental Programme |
| VDM | Vhembe District Municipality |
| WSSD | World Summit on Sustainable Development |

# LIST OF TABLES


| | |
|---|---|
| Table 1 | Sub-district population |
| Table 2 | Age/household Head |
| Table 3 | Indicators of basic services |
| Table 4 | Selected projects |
| Table 5 | Sample size |
| Table 6 | Examples of SED projects per area/village |
| Table 7 | Desired changes in SED projects |
| Table 8 | Progress in SED projects |
| Table 9 | Analysis framework |
| Table 10 | Methods of participation |
| Table 11 | Link between strategic objectives and SED projects |
| Table 12 | Budget allocation for SED projects |
| Table 13 | How resource needs affect implementation of SED projects |
| Table 14 | Examples of skills programmes offered |
| Table 15 | Stakeholder roles and responsibilities in SED projects |
| Table 16 | Monitoring and Evaluation issues in SED project |
| Table 17 | Opportunities in SED projects |
| Table 18 | Challenges in SED projects |
| Table 19 | Comparison of stakeholder perspectives |


# LIST OF FIGURES


| | |
|---|---|
| Figure 1 | Data analysis framework |
| Figure 2 | Sources of information on SED projects |
| Figure 3 | Contribution to sustainable livelihoods |
| Figure 4 | Variables impacting sustainability of SED projects |

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**ABSTRACT** ..... **I**

**DECLARATION** ..... **II**

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS** ..... **III**

**DEDICATION** ..... **IV**

**ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS** ..... **V**

**LIST OF TABLES** ..... **VI**

**LIST OF FIGURES** ..... **VI**

**TABLE OF CONTENTS** ..... **VII**

**CHAPTER ONE** ..... **1**

**INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY** ..... **1**

1.1 INTRODUCTION ..... 1
1.2 BACKGROUND ..... 1
*1.2.1 Overview of the Vhembe District* ..... *2*
*1.2.2 Programme Description* ..... *5*
*1.2.3 The National Framework for Sustainable Development (NFSD)* ..... *8*
*1.2.4 Overview of the South African Forestry Company Limited* ..... *9*
1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT ..... 10
1.4 PURPOSE STATEMENT ..... 11
1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS ..... 12
1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH ..... 12
1.7 CHAPTER OUTLINE ..... 13
1.8 CONCLUSION ..... 14

**CHAPTER TWO** ..... **15**

**LITERATURE REVIEW** ..... **15**

2.1 INTRODUCTION ..... 15
2.2 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS ..... 16
*2.2.1 Community Development* ..... *16*
*2.2.2 Development* ..... *17*
*2.2.3 Sustainable development* ..... *19*
2.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK UNDERPINNING THE STUDY ..... 25
*2.3.1 Sustainable development* ..... *25*
*2.3.2 Goals of sustainable development* ..... *27*
2.4 POVERTY ALLEVIATION ..... 28
2.5 RURAL COMMUNITY ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT ..... 29
2.6 MEASURING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ..... 30
2.7 INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE ..... 31
2.8 LESSONS FOR SED PROJECTS IN VHEMBE DISTRICT ..... 32
2.9 KNOWLEDGE GAP ..... 32
2.10 IMPLICATIONS OF THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE STUDY ..... 33
2.11 CONCLUSION ..... 34

**CHAPTER THREE** ..... **35**

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY** ..... **35**

3.1 INTRODUCTION ..... 35
3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH ..... 35
3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN ..... 36
3.4 DATA COLLECTION ..... 36
*3.4.1 Primary data* ..... *36*
*3.4.2 Secondary data* ..... *37*
*3.4.3 Field experience* ..... *37*
3.5 SAMPLING ..... 38
3.6 DATA ANALYSIS ..... 39
*3.6.1 How grounded-ness was achieved* ..... *41*
3.7 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY ..... 43
3.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH ..... 44
3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS ..... 45
3.10 CONCLUSION ..... 45

**CHAPTER FOUR** ..... **47**

**PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS** ..... **47**

4.1 INTRODUCTION ..... 47
4.2 SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS ..... 47
*4.2.1 Community Experience on SED Projects* ..... *48*
*4.2.2 Senior Management perspective* ..... *56*
*4.2.3 Programme Official's Perspective* ..... *60*
4.3 EMERGING THEMES ..... 68
4.4 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS ..... 68

**CHAPTER FIVE** ..... **70**

**ANALYSIS AND INTEPRETATION OF FINDINGS** ..... **70**

5.1 INTRODUCTION ..... 70
5.2 ANALYSIS OF KEY THEMES ..... 71
*5.2.1 Beneficiaries' Experiences* ..... *71*
*5.2.2 Contribution to job creation, skills development, poverty alleviation and social cohesion* ..... *77*
*5.2.3 Comparison of perspectives of management, programme officials, beneficiaries and the government* ..... *91*
5.3 COMPARISON OF FINDINGS WITH BRUNDTLAND COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT ..... 92
5.4 SUMMARY ..... 93

**CHAPTER SIX** ..... **95**

**CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS** ..... **95**

6.1 INTRODUCTION ..... 95
6.2 CONCLUSIONS ..... 95
6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS ..... 97
*6.3.1 Prioritise SED projects to meet unique community needs* ..... *98*
*6.3.2 Scale up project communications to improve awareness and access* ..... *98*
*6.3.3 Improve implementation process by capacitating local CBOs and NPOs* ..... *98*

*6.3.4 Recruit more staff locally to meet growing demand for SED projects* ..... *99*
*6.3.5 Review and adjust current monitoring and evaluation system* ..... *99*
*6.3.6 Benchmark SED projects to improve delivery and outcomes* ..... *99*
*6.3.7 Link SED interventions with the organisation's business strategy* ..... *100*
6.4 FUTURE RESEARCH ..... 100
**REFERENCES** ..... **102**
**APPENDIX** ..... **107**

# CHAPTER ONE

# INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

According to the National Framework on Sustainable Development (2008), South Africa aspires to be a sustainable, economically prosperous and self-reliant nation. South Africa safeguards its democracy by meeting the fundamental human needs of its people, by managing its limited ecological resources responsibly for current and future generations, and by advancing efficient and effective integrated planning and governance through national, regional and global collaboration. Within this context, chapter one explains the background, purpose and significance of the study regarding the contribution of the South African Forestry Company Limited (SAFCOL) to sustainable development in the Vhembe district of Limpopo province in South Africa.

## 1.2 BACKGROUND

Sustainable development and poverty alleviation is a priority of the South African Government, in line with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Rural communities face increasing unemployment and skills shortages which demotivate community members who could potentially have successful careers. These challenges are also reflected in the Rural Development Strategy (2006), which states that poverty remains the single most critical challenge confronting South Africa's rural communities.

In an effort to mitigate these challenges, SAFCOL, a state-owned company within the Department of Public Enterprises, was mandated to drive socio-economic development in currently disadvantaged areas by using existing forestry assets. This led to the establishment of the

SAFCOL Enterprise Development Department in 2006. The role of this department was to establish projects within areas of SAFCOL plantations that would be to the benefit of local communities (DBSA Report, 2009).
However, the contribution of socio-economic development (SED) projects to sustainable development in rural areas has not been sufficiently established, as no sector-specific studies have been conducted to determine the extent to which local communities benefit from these interventions. The lack of credible research data contributes to a knowledge gap, suggesting the need for a robust investigation to determine how well SED projects are implemented and how local communities view them. It is within this context that an assessment is being undertaken to determine SAFCOL's contribution to sustainable development in the Vhembe district of Limpopo Province.

### 1.2.1 Overview of the Vhembe District

The Vhembe District Municipality (VDM) has a population of 1,199,880 people, which is approximately one-fifth of the total population of Limpopo Province (Statistics South Africa, 2004). The principal economic drivers of the VDM are agriculture, tourism and mining. The main sectors that employ people are commercial and subsistence farming. Poverty and inequality in the region was exacerbated by the implementation of apartheid policies, which resulted in racial discrimination, limited access to education and limited jobs that would allow a family to live above the bread-line (Tshitangoni and Okorie, et. al., 2010). The profile of the VDM is provided in Tables 1, 2 and 3 below.

**Table 1: The sub-district population**

| Name of Sub-district | Total population |
|---|---|
| Thulamela | 625,524 |
| Makhado | 534,531 |
| Mutale | 88,726 |
| Musina | 45,002 |
| **District Totals** | 1,293,783 |

Source: VDM Profile, 2011

**Table 2: Age Household Head**

| 19 Years and Younger | 20-24 Years | 25-39 Years | 40-64 Years | 65 Years and Older |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3.3 % | 4.6 % | 19.8 % | 57.8% % | 19.0 % |

Source: VDM Profile, 2011

**Table 3: Indicator for basic services**

| Indicator for Basic Services | Community Survey 2007 |
|---|---|
| Percentage unemployed | 18.6% |
| Percentage traditional and informal dwelling, shacks and squatter settlements | 17.7% |
| Percentage households without access to improved sanitation | 14.9% |
| Percentage households without access to piped water | 8.0% |
| Percentage households without access to electricity for lighting | 20.9% |
| Percentage households without refuse removal by local authority/private company | 85.7% |

Source: VDM Profile, 2011

Vhembe District is largely rural and households are mostly headed by females, since the males migrate to the urban areas in search of employment. The area is faced with infrastructural backlogs in the provision of water, sanitation and electricity which impact negatively on the

health of these communities. The poor road infrastructure influences reasonable response times for vehicles such as ambulances, mobile clinics and police vehicles. The governance for Vhembe District is both traditional chieftainship and elected local government. The District relies on subsistence farming which is mostly dependent on rain-fed agricultural activities. The District has a high unemployment rate of almost 24%; the deprivation index is high at 3.6; and according to the Community Survey (2007) 12% of households live with an annual income below R4,800, or less than R400 per month.

The main languages spoken in VDM are Tshivenda (69%) and Xitsonga (27%), Sepedi (2%), Sesotho (1%) and Afrikaans (1%). Within this context, the study examined SAFCOL's community development projects as to whether they are meeting the needs of the community in relation to sustainable livelihoods. The intention is to explore the experiences of the VDM communities to determine if they benefited from the SED projects implemented by SAFCOL in the area. The research is of importance in the context of the magnitude and scale of the human and material resources required to implement SED projects generally, and for SAFCOL specifically.

The study was motivated by the perception that most rural sustainable development projects fail or cannot survive without continuous funding. Emphasis needs to be placed on building capacity and skills and the projects should be informed by a participatory process between the funder and the community. Therefore, the study may provide fresh perspectives and insights in terms of programme management practices and whether these resonate with the government's goal of sustainable development.

### 1.2.2 Programme Description

Given the broad scope and diverse nature of SAFCOL's SED initiatives in Limpopo Province in particular, it may be useful to highlight the specific projects that were considered by the study. According to SAFCOL's Strategic Plan (2010), the SED and enterprise development (ED) programmes are designed to be integrated, sustainable and consultative processes, with the main focus on the following goals:

a. Promotion and facilitation of Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment.
b. Promotion of capacity building, innovation and technical excellence.
c. Promotion of entrepreneurship.
d. To be recognised as a socially responsible corporate citizen.

At SAFCOL, SED and ED initiatives are viewed as the management of SAFCOL's overall contribution to society, including its role as social investor, employer and capacity builder. The projects focus on adjacent communities and youth groups with a strong emphasis on the following key impact areas:

a. Teaching and learning resources.
b. Environmental education and conservation.
c. Health care.
d. Small business and contractor development.
e. Infrastructure.
f. Corporate social investment contribution.
g. Prevention of women and child abuse.

According to the Annual Report (2011), SAFCOL strongly believes that it has a role to play in the growth and transformation of adjacent

communities and the society in which it operates. SAFCOL's strategic intent with regard to ED is, "developing increasingly economically vibrant and functional communities living adjacent to our plantations; establishing social partnerships based on shared visions and objectives; providing a platform for enhanced interaction, joint working relationships, co-operation and continuous creation of business opportunities, jobs and training as a direct result of SAFCOL's engagement with neighbouring communities; developing mutually beneficial business practices which lead to improved community safeguarding of forestry operations; promoting SAFCOL as the partner of choice to land claimants when seeking to address their developmental needs; seeking an increase in the quality of life of members of communities where partnerships have been created which resulted in increased job opportunities and income" (SAFCOL Annual Report, 2011).

Within this context, Table 4 below lists the specific projects that have been assessed by the study.

**Table 4: Selected projects**

| Project name | Purpose | Target groups |
|---|---|---|
| a. Beekeeping | Contribute to skills development | Community and farmers |
| b. Green Energy | Promote renewable energy use | Community and farmers |
| c. Timber frame structures | Contribute to housing | Community |
| d. Tshakuma Nursery | Contribute to skills development and employment | Community |

Source: Own

**a. Beekeeping:**

The SAFCOL Beekeeping Project in the Vhembe District in Limpopo was initiated in partnership with the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA). The objective was to develop specialist skills within a community

and to establish a pilot beekeeping site to produce and sell honey in a sustainable manner. SAFCOL was responsible for the procurement of all beekeeping related infrastructure while the DBSA focused on skills training and mentoring. Two co-operatives have been established with six beekeepers each which make use of SAFCOL's plantations and the provision of pollination services to farmers to produce honey.

**b. Green Energy:**

In 2011 this project was in the feasibility study stage, which sets out to determine the most effective way to apply forestry and related waste streams for the production of renewable energy. This project aims to contribute to the establishment of a sustainable model for the production of renewable energy, thereby positively contributing to the establishment of alternative energy generation techniques which not only has the advantage of addressing issues around energy shortages, but also adds considerable value to the local and national economy. The Green Energy Project is only being mentioned in this study and was not assessed due to it being a very new project. However, it must be noted that the Green Energy Project in Mpumalanga appears to be working well.

**c. Timber Frame Structures:**

The initiative promotes timber frame structures as an affordable and quality alternative to conventional brick-and-mortar construction, as they are better able to withstand the rigors of earthquakes, cyclones, snowstorms or temperature extremes. Modern technology ensures that the timber frame construction method is fire restrictive, as well as weather resistant. Timber homes do not detract in appearance or value when compared to conventional homes.

The great advantage of timber frame construction is the speed with which the building process takes place. This is further enhanced with pre-fabricated building systems in a controlled environment, thereby ensuring

a high quality product. As a general rule, lightweight materials such as timber have high insulation values. Lightweight construction methods, such as timber frame, are capable of providing a hollow wall cavity which can be filled with insulation material appropriate to the local climate.

Furthermore, timber frame housing is easy to assemble and dismantle, and will easily meet Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) requirements for low-cost housing in South Africa. Timber construction currently constitutes over 90% of all new dwellings in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Japan and Scandinavia. SAFCOL believes that timber frame housing is a cost-effective alternative which could meet the growing demand for housing in South Africa (SAFCOL Annual Report, 2011).

**d. Tshakhuma Nursery:**

The Nursery is part of a successful land claim by the Mphephu Community Cluster. It was identified as part of a needs analysis for the Mphephu Community Cluster in 2009. The project required the identification, evaluation and appointment of a suitable service provider to provide the Tshakhuma Nursery with two turnkey hydroponic tunnel solutions as part of the social investment programme. The turnkey solution had to include the tunnels, erection of the tunnels, seedlings, irrigation system with pumps and mixing tanks, chemicals, fertilizer, and Agri-SETA accredited training. The project is now running well and hopes to be self-sustainable in the near future.

### 1.2.3 The National Framework for Sustainable Development (NFSD)

In 2008, Cabinet approved the South African National Framework for Sustainable Development (NFSD). The NFSD explains the South African vision of a sustainable society as follows: “South Africa aspires to be a sustainable, economically prosperous and self-reliant nation state that safeguards its democracy by meeting the fundamental human needs of its

people, by managing its limited ecological resources responsibly for current and future generations, and by advancing efficient and effective integrated planning and governance through national, regional and global collaboration" (NFSD, 2008).

The following five strategic objectives are identified in the NFSD 1: "Enhancing systems for integrated planning and implementation; sustaining our ecosystems and using natural resources efficiently; moving towards a green economy; building sustainable communities; and responding effectively to climate change" (NFSD 1, 2008).

The vision of the NFSD is underpinned by a number of principles relating to fundamental human rights guaranteed in the Constitution, namely human dignity and social equity; justice and fairness; and democratic governance. The vision also embodies substantive principles for achieving sustainable development, such as efficient and sustainable use of natural resources; socio-economic systems embedded within, and dependent on, eco-systems; meeting basic human needs in a way that will ensure that resources necessary for long-term survival are not destroyed for short term gain; and implementation processes characterised by integration and innovation; consultation and participation (NFSD, 2003:6).

The NFSD objectives are relevant to the study as they highlight the need for an integrated approach to community development, particularly in rural areas where incidents of poverty and unemployment remain relatively high. This informs the assessment of SAFCOL's contribution to the Vhembe community.

### 1.2.4 Overview of the South African Forestry Company Limited

SAFCOL was established in 1992 in accordance with the Management of State Forests Act No. 128 of 1992. It is a registered public company in

terms of the Companies Act and a Schedule 2 public entity in terms of the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA). SAFCOL conducts its primary business within the forestry industry, ensuring the sustainable management of forests and other assets within its Company, to enhance value for the shareholder (SAFCOL, Integrated Report 2013: 3).

SAFCOL also plays a catalytic role in the realisation of the state's afforestation, rural development and economic transformation goals. SAFCOL is one of the leading forestry companies in SA and maintains this position by continuously developing its understanding of, and striving for, innovation throughout the full forestry and sawmilling value chain. The Company generates its revenue from the sale of forest products, sawn timber and other value added products. The South African Government is the sole owner of SAFCOL, which reports to the Minister of Public Enterprises through an independent Board of Directors (Board) appointed by the Minister (SAFCOL Annual Report, 2011).

## 1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The South African government views forestry as a sector with the potential to exert a significant positive impact in terms of the Development Strategy. The positioning of SAFCOL's operations in rural communities creates an opportunity for the entity to play a more active role in the socio-economic development of rural communities. This platform supports government's vision of empowering rural communities through forestry. One of the objectives of SAFCOL is to build other non-core businesses leading to socio-economic development and poverty alleviation. However, it appears that venture creation efforts have thus far been limited.

While significant progress has been made since the first democratic election of 1994, developmental challenges remain that need to be addressed in a manner that adheres to the principles of sustainable development (National Strategy for Sustainable Development, 2011-

2014). These challenges were highlighted by the General Household Survey of 2002-2009, which revealed that 13.4 % of households lived in informal dwellings; 7.6% of households did not have access to water supply from a safe source; 27.8% of households did not have access to sanitation; and 17.4% of households did not have access to electricity (Statistics South Africa, 2009). These concerns pose a threat not only to the achievement of a sustainable society in the longer term, but also to the ability of government to meet their short-term socio-economic objectives and deliver on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). To date, sustainable development initiatives in South Africa have been driven by the Department of Environmental Affairs (Jackson, 2009).

Furthermore, the Limpopo Provincial Growth Strategy (2009-2014) notes that poverty and unemployment are still relatively high in many parts of the Province, including the Vhembe district which is the focus of this research. According to the Vhembe District Municipality's Integrated Development Plan (2010), the area is plagued by high rates of unemployment and poverty. Unemployment stands at 53% and the poverty rate is 32%. In this context it is important to establish the contribution of SAFCOL's Beekeeping, Timber Framed Structures, and Tshakhuma Nursery projects to sustainable development in the Vhembe Community.

The lack of adequate and credible information on the implementation and performance of these SED projects informed the need for a critical investigation to be undertaken.

## 1.4 PURPOSE STATEMENT

The purpose of this research is to assess the implementation of SAFCOL's SED projects in the Vhembe District in Limpopo Province, with a view to determining their contribution to sustainable livelihoods in this community.

## 1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following are the research questions to be addressed in the research:

1. What are the experiences of the Vhembe community regarding SAFCOL's Beekeeping, Tshakhuma Nursery and Timber Frame Structures projects in relation to sustainable development?
2. How well do these projects respond to community needs with regard to poverty alleviation, skills transfer, job creation and small business development?
3. What can be done to improve implementation of SAFCOL's SED projects in the Vhembe District Municipality?

## 1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

Given the challenges facing the sustainability of rural enterprise development, the study serves as a benchmark with regard to the perceptions of the community *vis-a-vis* the perceptions of SAFCOL regarding sustainable livelihoods. It is hoped that this will give funders and government entities a better understanding of the community's perceptions in relation to sustaining their livelihoods, so that current SED interventions can be reviewed and better aligned to meet the developmental needs of local people.

At the programme level, the study aims to reveal the opportunities and challenges impacting on the implementation of SAFCOL's SED projects in the Vhembe District and to recommend appropriate measures to help improve delivery of these projects. Regarding knowledge creation, the study will add to the body of knowledge around sustainable development in rural areas specifically, and improve the understanding of how SED projects are planned and implemented, as well as whether accountability and integration mechanisms are in place to support their implementation.

In this way, the study may contribute to the current discourse on sustainable development in South Africa. Improving an understanding of socio-economic development practice is crucial in light of the government's recently launched National Development Plan (2011-2030) which, as indicated, aims to promote sustainable livelihoods, particularly in rural areas where incidents of poverty and unemployment are generally high. As yet, very little has been done to evaluate the efficacy and sustainability of corporate-driven development interventions in the Vhembe community in Limpopo and such a knowledge gap requires examination.

## 1.7 CHAPTER OUTLINE

**Chapter One: Introduction to the Study**

This chapter provides a general introduction and background information, the problem statement, the purpose of the research, the research questions and limitations of the study. It establishes the context for the proposed area of study (Vhembe District and the selected projects).

**Chapter Two: Literature Review**

This chapter reviews literature on sustainable development to provide a theoretical justification of the research. Through this review it will be possible to demonstrate what other scholars have discovered and what knowledge gaps exist in this area.

**Chapter Three: Research Methodology**

Chapter Three outlines the qualitative research strategy that has been utilised to collect the data required to address the research questions. The discussion includes research design, data collection techniques, sampling, reliability and validity, and research ethics.

**Chapter Four: Data Presentation**

This chapter will present and explain the data on the implementation of SAFCOL's Beekeeping, Tshakhuma Nursery and Timber Frame Structures projects to determine their contribution to sustainable development in the Vhembe District of Limpopo.

**Chapter Five: Analysis of Findings**

Drawing on Chapter Four, this section provides an in-depth analysis of the research findings to determine their meaning. As shown in Figure 1, the analysis will be realised through a five-step plan involving data capturing and processing; organisation and classification; decoding; interpretation; and integration with applicable theory.

**Chapter Six: Conclusions and Recommendations**

This chapter draws inferences from the results to demonstrate the implications for the research problem. This will serve to clarify the contribution that SAFCOL's SED projects are making to the Vhembe community of Limpopo Province.

## 1.8 CONCLUSION

The background and purpose of the study has been explained. The study is motivated by the need to determine whether SAFCOL's SED projects are helping to reduce poverty and unemployment in the Vhembe community of Limpopo Province. In particular, the study is interested in understanding whether these interventions contribute to the goal of sustainable livelihoods in this community and how the Vhembe District views such SED projects. Chapter Two reviews the literature on sustainable development in order to provide a theoretical background for the study.

# CHAPTER TWO

# LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

While the previous chapter provided the background and context of the study, chapter two reviews development literature with a view to obtaining insights into the meaning and practice of sustainable development. Literature review has several benefits for this research. Firstly, it will enable the researcher to learn about what others have discovered on the subject of sustainable development. Secondly, it will provide clarity on the concepts associated with the research topic and establish the theoretical framework for the study. Thirdly, it provides the basis for testing the credibility of the research findings in chapter five.

The review here covers three related themes. The first theme is sustainable development, with particular emphasis on the nature and meaning of this concept and how it connects with the purpose of the study.

The second theme includes the common approaches to sustainable development as they apply to South Africa and the rest of the world. Understanding these approaches is necessary as they inform SAFCOL's SED strategy.

The third theme relates to the causes of poverty in South Africa and the policy initiatives introduced by government to address this challenge. This is particularly important since part of SAFCOL's mission is to contribute to poverty alleviation in rural areas. The review will also examine poverty and unemployment levels in Limpopo's Vhembe District, which is the key focus of this research. This section then explains the implications of these issues for the study.

## 2.2 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

### 2.2.1 Community Development

The concept of community is of particular significance to the study as it aims to assess community development projects in the Vhembe District of Limpopo. As described by Jones (1995), the community includes both beneficiaries and working partners; that is, the people left in the area when the project ends. Thus, strengthening the community should be a specific target of the partnership. According to Harington (1997), community is frequently used as a strategic reminder that people are important; as a statement of identity; or as some sense of collective accountability or responsibility. Wilmot, cited in Byrne (1999), adds a third dimension to the concept of community, that is, people sharing a common problem, such as an illness or bond (for instance, working for the same employer).

Harington (1997) argues, however, that the concept of community often hides reality and lists four risks associated with the concept: its romanticised nostalgia; its emphasis on homogeneity; its related potential to mask inequality; and finally that, contrary to popular belief, acting in the name of community alone does not necessarily produce social change. This argument suggests that community development is not a simple and straightforward matter. It was necessary for the study to gain insights into the perspectives of the various role-players and beneficiaries in order to determine their experiences in relation to the implementation of SED projects in the Vhembe community.

Jones (1995) emphasises that communities are dynamic rather than static entities. Community is a dynamic interplay of historic processes and complex relationships, acted out in environments. Community embodies a wholeness; it is not enough to describe it as a sense of place, or as a product (of relationships between individuals) or as a social system.

Rather, community comes into existence and defines its own form out of the interaction of the participating elements, in environments and over time (Jones, 1995).

Within the context of the study, this means that the planning and implementation of community development interventions requires careful consideration of the dynamics and inequalities hidden beneath this concept. It remains to be seen whether these issues have been addressed in SED projects in the Vhembe community. Chapter four provides greater insight on these matters.

### 2.2.2 Development

According to Byrne (1999), the very concept of development is based on promoting local approaches that respond to local conditions. In practice, implementing a successful local development strategy entails the following: defining the local territory; choosing a relevant time-scale of at least eighteen months and up to six years; attaining the commitment of those with the resources and responsibility for local and community development; identifying an agency or planning group responsible for the strategy; completing a strategic audit then developing actions that are appropriate to the local area; setting clear, attainable and measurable strategic goals; building the capacity of individuals, organisations and development agents; complementing a global strategic perspective with niche strategies that build on local strengths; ensuring local involvement and participation; and finally monitoring, evaluating and re-adjusting the strategy (Byrne, 1999).

Based on this logic, the study was interested in understanding whether SED projects had been implemented properly in order to meet the unique development needs of the Vhembe community in Limpopo Province.

#### 2.2.2.1 Different views of development

According to Harris (2000), the benefits of development have been distributed unevenly, with income inequalities remaining persistent and sometimes increasing over time. The global numbers of extremely poor and malnourished people have remained high, and in some areas have increased, even as a global middle class has achieved relative affluence. There have been major negative impacts of development on the environment and on existing social structures. Many traditional societies have been devastated by the development of forests, water systems, and intensive fisheries. Urban areas in developing countries commonly suffer from extreme pollution and inadequate transportation, water and sewer infrastructure. Environmental damage, if unchecked, may undermine the achievements of development and may even lead to the collapse of essential ecosystems.

Similarly, Norgaard (1994) argues that modernism and its more recent manifestation as development have betrayed progress, and while a few communities have attained material abundance, resource depletion and environmental degradation now endanger many and threaten the aspirations of other communities to realise their hopes. Modernism has to an extent betrayed progress by contributing to an inability to correctly identify and address interwoven environmental, organizational and cultural problems

These problems are not minor blemishes on an overall record of success. They appear to be endemic to development as it has evolved over the past five decades, and threaten to turn success into failure (Harris, 2000).

From these arguments it is evident that development is not a simple and straightforward matter, but rather is characterised by controversy and global change.

The growing awareness of these challenges to traditional development thinking has led to the increasing acceptance of a new concept, that of sustainable development. This promotes development which protects the environment and advances social justice. This new formulation has been widely adopted both by critics of standard development practice and by leaders of existing development institutions.

### 2.2.3 Sustainable development

Although there is no consensus on the precise meaning of sustainable development, it is widely recognised that it promotes sustainable use of renewable natural resources, protection of ecosystems, preservation of biological diversity, reduction of poverty and unemployment, and improvement of living standards for the poor (Daly, 1990; Van den Bergh and Hofkes, 1998; Mulder, 2001).

Lele (1991) draws on the Brundtland Commission on Sustainable Development in observing that, “Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. According to Lele, most people use the phrase “sustainable development” interchangeably with “ecologically sustainable or environmentally sound development”. Bossil (1999) argues that sustainable development of human society has environmental, material, ecological, social, economic, legal, cultural, political and psychological dimensions that all require attention.

As mentioned in Chapter One, the Vhembe community remains characterised by persistent poverty, unemployment and illiteracy. Based on Bosill’s (1999) point above, it is therefore important to establish whether SAFCOL has made any meaningful contribution to help alleviate these challenges to ensure sustainable livelihoods in the Vhembe community.

#### 2.2.3.1 Principles of sustainable development

The following principles are generally associated with sustainable development theory:

a. **People-centred:** Sustainable eradication of poverty will be achieved only if external support focuses on what matters to people, understands the difference between groups of people, and works with them in a way that is congruent with their current livelihood strategies, social environment, and ability to adapt.
b. **Responsive and participatory:** Poor people themselves must be key actors in identifying and addressing livelihood priorities. Outsiders need processes that enable them to listen and respond to the poor.
c. **Multi-level:** Poverty eradication is an enormous challenge that will only be overcome by working at multiple levels, ensuring that micro-level activity informs the development of policy and an effective enabling environment, and that macro-level structures and processes support people to build on their own strengths.
d. **Conducted in partnership:** Partnerships between all stakeholders is recommended, and as a minimum strong partnerships between the public and the private sectors is essential.
e. **Sustainable:** There are four key dimensions to sustainability: economic, institutional, social and environmental sustainability. All are important and a balance must be found between them.
f. **Dynamic: E**xternal support must recognize the dynamic nature of livelihood strategies, respond flexibly to changes in

> people's situations, and develop longer term commitments (Harris, 2000).

The six principles mentioned above all have a direct bearing on the study. Collectively, these principles emphasise the need for community participation, empowerment, development partnerships, a multi-stakeholder approach, flexibility, and sustainability, all of which are central to the implementation of SED projects in the Vhembe community.

#### 2.2.3.2 Sustainable Livelihoods

The Brundtland Commission on Environment and Development introduced the idea of sustainable livelihoods in 1987. This was followed by the expansion of the concept at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 to suggest that the achievement of sustainable livelihoods should be a broad goal towards the eradication of poverty (Krantz, 2001). The definition of sustainable livelihoods proposed by Chambers and Conway (1992) reflects this:

> A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets and activities required for a means of living: a livelihood is sustainable which can cope with and recover from stress and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, and provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for the next generation; and which contributes net benefits to other livelihoods at the local and global levels and in the short and long term (Chambers and Conway, 1992).

According to Chambers and Conway (1992), a livelihood is more often applied at a household level. Livelihood" perspectives have been central to development thinking and practice. In addition, Scoones (2009) argues that livelihood perspectives begin with how different people in different situations and locations live. However, it is further argued that rural

development usually focuses on specific activities such as agriculture, farm labour, wages and small enterprises, amongst others.

The livelihood perspectives above are relevant to the study as they underscore the need for ensuring that local communities are capacitated with skills and assets so that they can deal with the challenges presented by their environment. Scoones (2009) raises an important in that the sustainable livelihood interventions need to determine how different people live. This means knowing their unique development needs before undertaking projects. This logic applies also to the implementation of SED projects in the Vhembe community.

People engage in complex activities and interactions which portray a wide range of ways in which people make a living. Scoones (2009) makes reference to the fact that livelihood approaches have challenged single-sector approaches in addressing complex rural development problems. It is important that the approach that is adopted takes cognisance of the local issues and deals with them from a local perspective. It does not make sense to impose livelihood strategies on a community that are not underpinned by the local dynamics related to the particular challenge. Once focused on the local environment and having a clear understanding of the complexities of the local realities, a livelihood approach would then be ideal as a participatory approach, which is a negotiated learning exchange between the local people and outsiders (Scoones, 2009). Since the 1990s, many development agencies began implementing livelihood approaches to their programmes. Scoones (2009) argues, however, that it is not a simple matter to put into practice, as the organisation has its structured form, disciplinary biases and funding structures which are based on other ways of thinking.

It can thus be deduced from the above that there are two vital points that are relevant to the study. First, it is clear that promoting a sustainable

livelihood requires close collaboration between sponsors and local communities, hence the need for a negotiated learning process. Second, to be successful, sustainable livelihood interventions should be context-specific and should be localised to ensure that they meet the needs of local people. In this way, sustainable livelihoods become participatory. The research findings in chapter four will expand on these factors.

Scoones (2009) argues that livelihood approaches are not as prominent as they previously, and attributes this to the fact that the perspectives of sustainable livelihoods' lack of engagement with global economic conditions. Another important aspect to consider is that a livelihood needs to be linked to governance debates in development. Scoones (2009) argues further that livelihood debates cannot be left to Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), consultants and researchers who are involved in local level development. There appears to be some degree of disconnect between this group and those concerned with state politics, governance regimes and discussions centred on agrarian reform.

It must also be noted that regarding the sustainability of a livelihood, the area being addressed was that of coping with immediate shocks and stresses. The most debated topic currently is that of climate change and global environmental change (Scoones, 2009). Livelihood perspectives cannot remain central to development thinking but need to be integrated with politics, knowledge, micro- and macro-economics, social movements, migration and globalisation.

Based on the above, it follows therefore, that planning and implementation of SED projects cannot ignore the social, economic and political issues impacting community development in the Vhembe area.

#### 2.2.3.3 The three components of sustainable development

In the discourse and use of the concept of sustainable development, there has been recognition of the three aspects of sustainable development::

**1. Economic:** An economically sustainable system must be able to produce goods and services on a continuing basis, to maintain manageable levels of government and external debt, and to avoid extreme sectoral imbalances which damage agricultural or industrial production. The economic dimension is addressed in the study by considering the contribution of SED projects to job creation and asset formation.

**2. Environmental:** An environmentally sustainable system must maintain a stable resource base, avoiding over-exploitation of renewable resource systems or environmental sink functions, and should be allowed to deplete non-renewable resources only to the extent that investment is made in adequate substitutes. This includes maintenance of biodiversity, atmospheric stability, and other ecosystem functions not ordinarily classed as economic resources. Environmental issues are relevant to the study, because one of SAFCOL's goals is to use timber frame structures to support low-cost housing development in the Vhembe community. Other examples include the nursery project and the fire prevention programme, which intends to transfer agricultural and nature conservation skills to local communities. The question is whether SAFCOL is able to customise its sustainable livelihood interventions to accommodate the diverse needs of the Vhembe community.

**3. Social:** A socially sustainable system must achieve distributional equity, adequate provision of social services including health and education, gender equity, and political accountability and participation. The social dimension is central to the study because women, children and the youth

tend to be the most vulnerable groups in the context of poverty and unemployment. SAFCOL's contribution to sustainable development will be assessed on its ability to address these issues in a constructive manner.

These three elements of sustainability introduce many potential complications to the original simple definition. The goals expressed or implied are multidimensional, raising the challenge of how to balance objectives and how to judge success or failure. For example, provision of adequate food and water supplies may require changes in land use which will decrease biodiversity. Non-polluting energy sources are more expensive and will increase the burden on the poor for whom they represent a larger proportion of daily expenditure. Adjudicating on the precedence of the various goals and needs thus becomes a critical aspect of sustainable development.

## 2.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK UNDERPINNING THE STUDY

According to Vithal and Jansen (2010), a theoretical framework may be described as a well-developed and coherent explanation for an event. The reason for specifying a theoretical framework is to locate the research. That is, to signal where the research is coming from; to test a theory that will assess the validity of a theoretical proposition in the study being undertaken, or to apply a theory so as to use a theory's propositions in the design and conduct of the study. In other words, the theoretical framework provides the basis for conducting the research (Babbie, 2014).

### 2.3.1 Sustainable development

Prior to the emergence of sustainable development theories and approaches, development theory was largely dominated by classical approaches from the 1980s. These included modernisation and dependency theory. While classical theories were more focused on economic growth as the driver of development, sustainable development

proposes a holistic approach to development that includes local people and the natural environment. This research is informed and guided by sustainable development theory, which is explained in more detail below.

As explained, sustainable development reflects a process that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Often called inter-generational equality, the intention is that existing natural resources should be shared not only with people who are alive today, but also with future generations of the Earth's inhabitants. While a certain amount of the planet's resources may be utilised, a natural resource should never be entirely depleted (National Framework for Sustainable Development, 2008). Thus, some of the questions included in the study aimed at determining whether SAFCOL's projects contribute to the long-term prosperity of the Vhembe community as well as the preservation of the natural environment.

Sustainable development requires people to rely as much as possible on renewable resources (the kind that can be replenished) by obtaining power from the sun, for example, rather than power from fossil fuels such as oil, coal, and natural gas, which take millions of years to form. Over and above the careful stewardship of natural resources, sustainable development promotes the eradication of poverty and extreme income and wealth inequalities, the goal of full employment, the provision of access to quality and affordable basic services for all South Africans, and the fostering of a stable, safe, and just society. As indicated in chapter one, the social challenges in the Vhembe community include poverty, unemployment and illiteracy. Based on this, it is therefore important for the study to establish if SAFCOL projects addressed these issues in this area.

### 2.3.2 Goals of sustainable development

According to Lode and Meyer (2012), the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), commonly referred to as the Rio Conference or Earth Summit, was a major success in raising public awareness on the need to integrate environment and development. In the preparatory process for the Rio Summit in 1992, there were a number of proposals for institutional reform to address the challenges of sustainable development. These include the following:

a. **Biodiversity:** To ensure that, by 2030, the Aichi Biodiversity Targets have been realized.
b. **Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP):** To achieve by 2030 a significant rise in production processes reflecting the best available technologies for eco-efficiency, recycling, remanufacturing, reuse of waste materials, as well as product durability and longevity.
c. **Ecosystem Services:** To double by 2030 the establishment of national and regional protected areas in order to maintain a wide range of eco-system services.
d. **Resource efficiency:** By 1930, to increase industrial resource efficiency by 30%.
e. **Forests:** To reduce by three quarters, between 2005 and 2030, the deforestation rates.
f. **Land, including agriculture:** To achieve by 2030, zero net land degradation.
g. **Sustainable Public Procurement (SPP):** To ensure that by 2030, two thirds of the world's goods and services are procured by governments from sources certified by objective third parties as sustainably produced.

Of all the issues mentioned above, resource efficiency, forests, land and agriculture are more relevant to the study as they are directly linked to the implementation of SED projects in the Vhembe community. Therefore, it is important to know whether these issues were considered in the implementation of SED projects in the Vhembe community.

### 2.4 Poverty alleviation

For the purpose of this research study, it is important to have an understanding of poverty, especially rural poverty. According to May (2000), poverty is defined as the, "inability of individuals, households or entire communities to command sufficient resources to satisfy a socially acceptable minimum standard of living" (May, 2000:5). It can be further emphasised that in any country, the definition of poverty is when a person's quality of life is measured against the socially acceptable standard of living of that country.

South Africa is viewed an upper-to-middle income country, yet most South African households experience some degree of poverty or are vulnerable to being poor. In addition to this phenomenon, South Africa is among the most unequal countries in the world with respect to distribution of income and wealth (May, 2000). According to May (2000), one of the causes of poverty has been identified as being the impact of apartheid, which robbed people of their assets, especially land. Depriving people of basic needs such as access to water, electricity, education, health facilities, sanitation and proper housing strips them of their dignity. Apartheid has influenced this picture of poverty which has affected mainly Black citizens, especially those who live in rural areas.

Poverty is prevalent in rural areas and lack of employment is the single greatest cause of rural poverty. According to Aliber (2003), in 1999 over 51% of the rural workforce was unemployed. Rural poverty is further aggravated by the lack of access to productive resources. Aliber (2003)

explains that the South African government has made efforts to eliminate poverty, which have been frustrated by the continuing job losses in the formal sector of the economy. In addition, it has been found that the measures taken for successful poverty alleviation have been undermined by the limited capacity of government and civil society in the early years of the new democratic dispensation.

A further challenge in addressing poverty, as explained by Aliber (2003), is the issue of policy makers not having a clear understanding of the type of poverty being addressed. Therefore, it can be deduced that different measures are taken to address different kinds of poverty. Aliber (2003) alludes to the fact that there is a knowledge gap around the incidence and causes of poverty, resulting in further knowledge gaps on measures that will work for different situations. It should be noted that it is only the poor themselves who can identify what poverty is.

Limpopo Province is the second poorest province in South Africa. The Province is divided into five district municipalities, which includes the Vhembe District. The population of Vhembe is 1,199,880 (Statistics South Africa:2004). Government, in addressing its social obligations, has given much attention to addressing the poverty and inequality caused by, *inter alia*, the apartheid policies.

## 2.5 RURAL COMMUNITY ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

There is a widely held view that small business development is essential for developing economies (Ladzani, 2010). Small businesses, especially in rural areas, are fundamental to addressing unemployment and reducing poverty. However, there are obstacles that reduce the impact of small enterprise development, namely regulation, legal impediments, access to markets, procurement and finance.

South Africa's political past contributed to the negative state of small enterprise development. However, since 1994, policies have been put in place by the democratic government and have been implemented to support small enterprise development. Government has established statutory bodies that assist small enterprise. The services provided include institutional building, training programmes, mentoring, marketing, procurement and technical assistance (Ladzani, 2010).

One such intervention which the government of South Africa implemented is the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) as a platform to create employment, especially among marginalised communities. One output of the EPWP is to establish enterprise co-operatives and train people in the necessary skills (Chakwizira, 2010).

Within SAFCOL, the intention of the beekeeping project, a partnership between DBSA and SAFCOL, was to create immediate jobs for 15 Beekeepers in order to provide income for approximately 30 families. Additional job opportunities were to be created in the processing of honey. It was envisaged that the business would become self-sustainable and the community would take over all activities of the business after three years (DBSA Grant Appraisal Report, 2009). Skills development, knowledge of beekeeping, management skills and computer skills are necessary for community members to ensure that SED projects do not fail in the Vhembe community.

## 2.6 MEASURING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Indicators of sustainable development are needed to guide policies and decisions at all levels of society: village, town, city, district or county, province or state, nation, region, continent and the world. Sustainable development is measured through a wide range of indicators, including greenhouse gas emissions, resource use, waste, bird populations, fish stocks, ecological impacts of air pollution, river quality, economic growth,

active community participation, crime, employment, workless households, childhood poverty, pensioner poverty, education, health inequality, mobility, social justice, environmental equality, and individual well-being. Some of the questions included in the study sought to determine if the Vhembe communities had benefited from SAFCOL's SED projects.

## 2.7 INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

To enrich the study, four international experiences involving sustainable livelihoods projects were considered: Namibia, Kenya, Pakistan and Zambia. In Namibia, the evaluation revealed that for the more secure households the main issues were how local development projects affected their livestock herds (via predation, exclusion from grazing, and/or enhanced common property resource management) and whether they had access to new tourism jobs. For poorer households; access to small amounts of income, elephant damage to crops, and continued access to wildlife/tourism areas for harvesting plant resources, were the critical issues (Farrington, Carney, Ashley and Turton, 1999).

In the Kenyan Wildlife Project, the challenges included conflict over access to resources, lack of the critical partnerships needed to drive implementation of the project, and the varying degrees of poverty across villages, which impacted on the prioritisation of needs.

In Zambia, the implementation of sustainable livelihoods was impeded by elite domination of access to resources and in limited access by the poor to public services, while in Pakistan, sustainable livelihoods programmes were hampered by power relations and marginalisation of the poor from access to almost all capital resources, especially land (Farrington, Carney, Ashley and Turton, 1999). What may be deduced from these experiences is that development is a complex process that is impacted by a wide range of factors, including sub-cultures, politics and the unique preferences of local communities.

## 2.8 LESSONS FOR SED PROJECTS IN VHEMBE DISTRICT

Collectively, the experiences of Kenya, Namibia, Pakistan and Zambia provide valuable lessons that are relevant to SAFCOL's contribution to sustainable livelihoods in the Vhembe community. For example, the Namibian experience highlighted the risk of treating community needs as homogenous and livelihoods concerns vary between people and places. .This reinforces the point made by Harington (1997) that people in a community do not necessarily have the same development needs. For example, while the poor may have concerns about access to grazing land, the local elites may be more interested in large-scale tourism development projects.

The Kenyan experience, on the other hand, demonstrated how conflict over access to resources or assets can impede livelihood choices and the need for prioritising development partnerships. In Pakistan, constraints to community development were rooted in power relations and marginalisation of the poor. In Zambia, major constraints to alleviating poverty lay in the elite domination of access to resources and in limited access by the poor to public services. Collectively, these lessons were very helpful in assessing SAFCOL's contribution to sustainable development in the Vhembe community.

## 2.9 KNOWLEDGE GAP

Consideration of the literature that has sprung up around the concept of sustainable development shows a lack of consistency in its interpretation. More importantly, while the all-encompassing nature of the concept gives it political strength, its current formulation by the mainstream of sustainable development thinking contains significant weaknesses. These include an incomplete perception of the problems of poverty and environmental degradation, and confusion on the role of economic growth and the

concepts of sustainability and participation. This study attempts to close this knowledge gap by demonstrating how social capital can be harnessed to promote sustainable development in rural contexts.

## 2.10 IMPLICATIONS OF THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE STUDY

Although other development theories, such as modernisation, dependency, sustainable development or a people-centred approach, may be relevant to the study to some extent, sustainable development theory is more appropriate to the research, as it puts local communities at the centre of development. Not only does sustainable development mark a departure from top-down approaches to development but also highlights the importance of preserving resources to ensure a sustainable livelihood.

Another important contribution of the sustainable development approach is that it facilitates an understanding of the underlying causes of poverty. This approach highlights the different factors that limit people's access to resources and development opportunities, such as power, gender relations, income differentials and preferences. In this way, sustainable development provides a useful framework for assessing the effects of development interventions on people's lives, rather than only, for example, one-dimensional productivity or income criteria, as suggested by modernisation and economic development theories.

More importantly, sustainable development theory provides a more holistic view of what resources such as capital, social capital and physical and natural resources are needed to facilitate meaningful development in communities. Certainly, this information is crucial for planners and implementers of SED projects in the Vhembe community.

A related advantage of the sustainable development approach is its high emphasis on targeted interventions. By targeting specific groups in a

community, such as rural women, orphans and vulnerable children (OVC), and youth and people living with HIV/AIDS, project implementers are able to utilise scarce resources prudently and efficiently. The notion behind differentiated interventions is that the degree and impact of poverty, unemployment and other social challenges will vary from one group to another. These challenges require group-specific interventions rather than criterion-based development efforts.

In addition to targeted interventions, sustainable development theory also encourages use of a bottom-up approach. This approach encourages community members to participate in and contribute to planning and implementation of development projects, thereby ensuring that their views, inputs and indigenous knowledge are reflected in such projects. This consultative and inclusive approach contrasts sharply with traditional development theories which have a tendency to place government and business representatives at the centre of SED, resulting in exclusion of local communities from planning, implementation and monitoring processes. As will be seen in chapters four and five, SED projects faced formidable challenges in this area.

## 2.11 CONCLUSION

The literature review indicates that that sustainable development needs to be democratised, decentralised and pluralistic. In practice, this means that it will have to balance wealth creation with wealth distribution. This underlines the importance of social capital, the role of the state, and the inclusion of local government and non-governmental organisations in development. What is clear from this statement is that sustainable development requires an holistic, multi-stakeholder approach. In the case of SAFCOL, this requires mobilising local support and community participation to ensure that development efforts lead to better living standards for local communities in the Vhembe community. Chapter Three explains the research methodology employed by the study.

# CHAPTER THREE

# RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

## 3.1 INTRODUCTION

While Chapter Two reviewed development literature to provide a theoretical framework for the study, Chapter Three explains the methodology employed to assess the implementation of SAFCOL's SED projects in the Vhembe District in Limpopo. Assessment of these projects is important as they represent SAFCOL's contribution to the government's goal of alleviating poverty and ensuring sustainable livelihoods.

The discussion here focuses on research approach and design; primary and secondary data sources; data collection methods; purposive sampling; reliability and validity; data analysis guidelines; and ethical issues. As the study is exploratory in nature, the qualitative approach will provide the basis for understanding the implementation of SAFCOL's SED projects and how the Vhembe community views these projects.

## 3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH

The study followed principles of qualitative research in order to understand the implementation of SAFCOL's SED projects in the Vhembe community in Limpopo Province. Qualitative research is appropriate for this study as it is based on a naturalist approach that helps the researcher understand phenomena in a specific setting. According to Patton (2001), qualitative research is any kind of research that produces findings derived from real-world settings where, "the phenomena of interest unfold naturally" (Patton, 2001:39). Interviewing and observation are strategies that play a dominant role in the naturalist approach (Golafshani, 2003).

## 3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

According to Maxwell (2005), a qualitative research design should be a reflective process that operates through every step of the study (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995:24). The research design is the plan for how the researcher intends conducting the research, including how the data is collected and analysed. Permission was sought from the project manager of the Vhembe District to conduct interviews with at least ten community members involved in the project. Using a qualitative design is important when a researcher intends to assess the implementation of a policy intervention or programme (Morra, Imas and Rist, 2009).

## 3.4 DATA COLLECTION

When conducting qualitative research, the data collected is directed towards the 'who', 'what' and experiences of the area of study (Sandelowski, 2000). The techniques for data collection in this research study will be primarily those of interviewing, observation and examination of documents. The research utilised both primary and secondary data. The theory is grounded in the data and is an inductive method. According to the Grounded Theory approach (Strauss and Corbin, 1994), as the data collection process proceeds, the researcher must review the data collection methods and reformulate the previous concept. In essence, theory will be developed during the data collection process.

### 3.4.1 Primary data

Primary data was collected through semi-structured interviews and observation. The semi-structured interview questions allowed for open-ended questioning. Open-ended questions enabled the researcher to explore further within the predetermined area of enquiry. They also allowed respondents to communicate their experiences, opinions and perceptions without being restricted. Open-ended questions focus on

ordinary events that occur naturally in the natural setting and in this research reflected the sustainable livelihoods the Vhembe District (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

It is imperative that the correct target group is identified when conducting interviews. In this study, the project manager at SAFCOL was interviewed as a representative responsible for ensuring that SAFCOL meets its social responsibilities, in particular that of developing rural enterprise development projects for sustainable livelihoods. At the community level, the community leaders as well as a set target of community members involved in the various SED projects were identified as key respondents.

### 3.4.2 Secondary data

While primary data refers specifically to the actual evidence elicited from the target group (namely respondents), secondary data, on the other hand, implies refined information that is readily available for public consumption. For the purposes of this study, secondary data was sourced from SAFCOL's strategic reports, SED programmes, annual reports and websites, as well as the policy frameworks governing local economic development in South Africa. With these sources, it was possible to formulate a view as to the principles and practices that need to be followed to implement SED interventions generally and what the current thinking is on these issues.

### 3.4.3 Field experience

Although the initial idea was to have the interviews recorded, this had to be modified to alleviate the concerns of the respondents, particularly at the community level. Consequently, recording was replaced with note-taking to make the respondents feel comfortable. Interviews were conducted with the respondents either on site or telephonically, necessitated by time

constraints as some of the respondents, especially project managers, were unavailable due to work commitments.

On site, the researcher deduced that some of the respondents were very happy with the work being done by SAFCOL and their expression was one of enthusiasm.

On the other hand, the researcher was saddened and concerned by some of the responses from certain respondents, especially from the beekeeping project, where the factory had closed. The people are still willing to work voluntarily to get the factory running and hope to be paid once the factory has enough money. The respondents indicated a strong willingness to work to improve their lives and contribute to the well-being and dignity of their families and themselves.

### 3.5 SAMPLING

When conducting qualitative research, the aim is to provide the researcher with an in-depth understanding of the events in its natural setting, as seen through the eyes and minds of the people in the chosen setting. The sampling method is non-probability sampling and the study aimed to use a purposive sampling technique which is in line with the investigative and exploratory nature of the study (Wilmot, 2005).

One approach of purposive sampling is “theoretical sampling”, which is developed from the “grounded theory” approach (Glasser and Strauss, 1967). Grounded theory may be expressed as theory being developed through an interactive process. The interactive process is a process whereby continual sampling, collection and analysis of data takes place, which informs the next stage of the sample design. This process recurs until no new ideas or theories emerge (Wilmot, 2005). In this research, respondents were selected from SAFCOL and the Vhembe community to

ensure that sufficient data is generated to address the research questions. The sample is presented in Table 5 below.

**Table 5: Sample size**

| Stakeholder | Category /Sector | Number |
|---|---|---|
| Senior management | Leadership | 3 |
| Programme officials | Project management | 6 |
| Beneficiaries | Local community | 10 |
| Total | | 19 |

Source: Own

### 3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is the manifestation of what the researcher has read (books, journals, documents), has heard (interviews in this study), and has seen (observation). The data is a representation of the reality of the situation. Such data needs to be processed and analysed. During the analysis process, data was organised into categories according to concepts and themes (Neuman, 2011). Figure 1 below depicts the data analysis framework used to analyse the findings of the study.

**Figure 1: Data Analysis Framework**

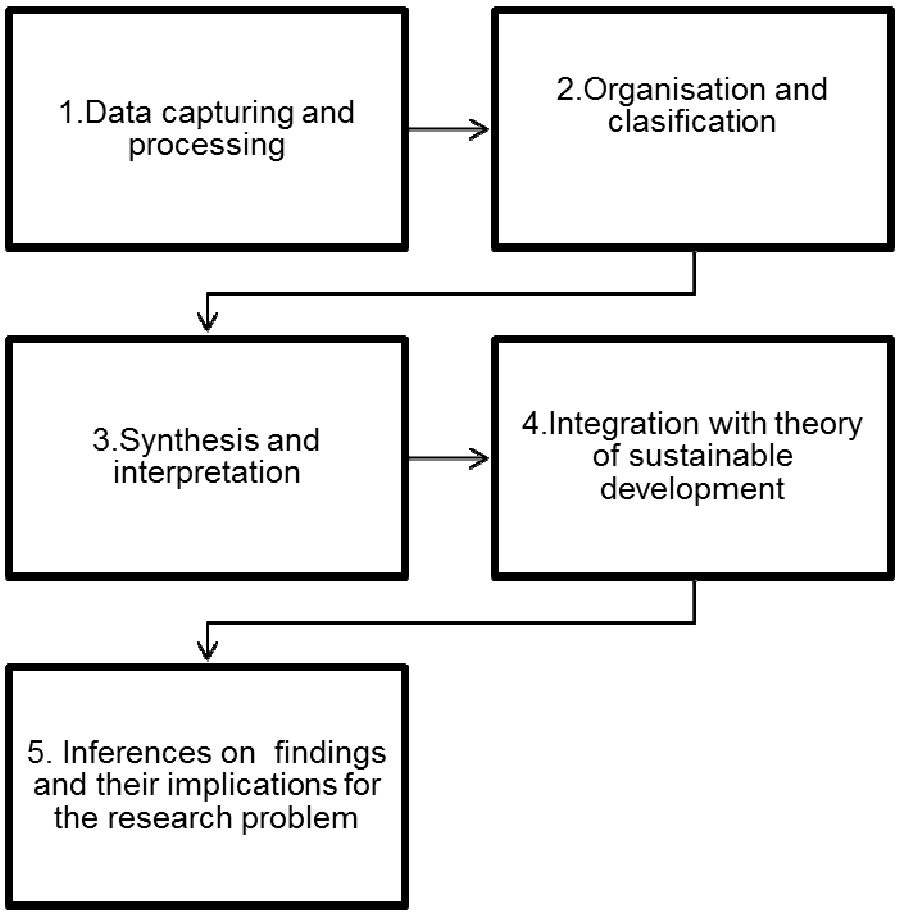



Figure 1 above depicts the five sequential steps that were followed to analyse the data on the implementation of SAFCOL's SED projects in the Vhembe community of Limpopo Province. This analytical framework is based on the theoretical principles suggested by Creswell (1998), Merriam (2009) and Neuman (2011). These authors see qualitative data analysis as a series of integrated steps which entail reducing the data into writing; organising and categorising the data into headings and sub-headings, synthesizing and interpreting the data to create meaning; determining linkages between the data and supporting theory (that is, sustainable development); and, finally, drawing conclusions (inferences) on the

meaning of the results in light of the research problem. Taylor-Powell and Renner (2003) argues that analysis and interpretation are required to bring order and understanding.

The following section describes how grounded-ness was achieved in this study.

### 3.6.1 How grounded-ness was achieved

According to Babbie (2014:315), grounded theory is the attempt to derive theories from an analysis of the patterns, themes and common categories discovered in the observational data. This requires the researcher to be scientific and creative when analysing the data from the target area.

To achieve grounded-ness in this research, the five principles of grounded theory suggested by Straus and Corbin (1994), were applied, namely:

1. **Think comparatively:** The data sets obtained from the six villages of Vhembe, namely Levubu, Muledane, Maranzhe, Murangoni and Witvlag, were compared and contrasted to identify similarities, variations and emerging themes (chapter five).
2. **Obtain multiple views:** Data sources were triangulated/varied to ensure that the views of all the key stakeholders in SED projects are reflected in the analysis.
3. **Periodically step back:** In analysing the data, the researcher reflected on the data and underlying assumptions to reduce bias and improve the credibility of the results.
4. **Maintain an attitude of scepticism:** The answers derived from the respondents were interrogated and verified using evidence from the literature on sustainable development and lessons from the four countries, which were Namibia, Kenya, Pakistan and Zambia (chapter two).

5. **Follow the research procedures:** Appropriate qualitative research techniques involving interviews, case study design and purposive sampling were applied to assess the contribution of SAFCOL to sustainable livelihoods in the Vhembe community. This assisted in improving the validity and reliability of the research findings.

In this study it is imperative to establish whether or not SED projects are contributing to the alleviation of poverty and unemployment in the Vhembe District, and whether they are implemented in accordance with SAFCOL's Strategic Plan as well as the NFSD. The analysis followed the inductive approach, which forms part of qualitative research. According to Thomas (2003), the primary purpose of the inductive approach is to allow research findings to emerge from the frequent, dominant or significant themes inherent in raw data, without the restraints imposed by structured methodologies.

Through inductive reasoning, it is possible to condense extensive and varied raw text data into a brief summary format to establish clear links between the research objectives and the summary findings derived from the raw data, and to ensure these links are both transparent (able to be demonstrated to others) and defensible (justifiable given the objectives of the research) in order to develop a model or theory about the underlying structure of experiences or processes which are evident in the text (Thomas, 2003).

The researcher identified themes from the raw data. This process of open coding is usually performed when the researcher goes through the data for the first time. The codification process is a symbolic representation of the information. The initial coding was further refined by re-coding, comparing codes, and merging of codes into higher themes so that the findings of the study can be written with ease. The benefit of data reduction allows the researcher to code what is relevant to the study and extract what is not

(Miles and Huberman, 1994). The themes of sustainable development, poverty and rural enterprise development formed the basis of the analysis. These three themes address the main research questions of this study.

## 3.7 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

Patton (2001) states that validity and reliability are areas of concern to qualitative researchers in the process of designing a study, analysing results, and judging the quality of the study. Validity and reliability is mainly used as a concept to test quantitative research. However, to test the quality and credibility of qualitative research the concept is also used to test if the data presented is valid and reliable. Trustworthiness and the credibility of information in qualitative research are essential.

Quantitative research is supported by the positivist approach and measures validity and reliability by measurable facts (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992:6). It is seen as being valid as it is based on numbers. Some scholars see social facts as a problem to measure for validity and reliability. However, it is argued that a qualitative researcher embraces his or her involvement within the research (Patton, 2001). The researcher is the instrument of measure in qualitative research, since when there are changes he/she should be present to record changes both before and after the change occurs (Patton, 2001:14).

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the quality of a qualitative research study is based on the following criteria: credibility, neutrality, consistency, and applicability. In addition, to test for validity and reliability of the qualitative research, the triangulation method is used. Triangulation includes multiple methods of data collection such as observation, interviews and recordings which were used in this research study. In keeping with the principle of reliability and validity, the researcher drew on a peer researcher's interpretation of the data to improve the analysis. In

addition, permission was sought from SAFCOL to involve its leading partners in the SED projects, such as Komatiland Forests Limited. These and other participating enterprises hold the key to the implementation of SAFCOL's SED projects and therefore have a wealth of experience in relation to the actual being done in communities.

Other useful methods that were used to enhance the reliability and validity of research results include scrutinising the data to identify potential errors, omissions and inconsistencies; comparing the data across the different stakeholder communities participating in the research; making follow-up calls to obtain clarity and missing information; and checking the research report before submission.

## 3.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

SED programmes generally have a broad scope as they include both social and economic interventions. This research only covers one area, namely Vhembe District Municipality, which limits the generalisability of the research findings across Limpopo Province. A second concern is that non-probability methods such as judgemental sampling are generally prone to bias as they are based entirely on the researcher's discretion. In addressing this concern, the researcher collected data from different stakeholders involved in the implementation of SED projects in the Vhembe community. As a result, it was possible to obtain supply-side and demand-side perspectives on the implementation of SED projects in this area. Challenges associated with data collection included the difficulty of meeting some managerial respondents due to lack of time on their part as they had full work schedules and it became necessary to use both face-to-face and telephonic interviews to obtain sufficient data for the study.

## 3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical issues are present in any kind of research. The research process creates tension between the aims of research to make generalisations for the good of others, and the rights of participants to maintain privacy. Ethics pertains to doing good and avoiding harm. Harm can be prevented or reduced through the application of appropriate ethical principles. Thus, the protection of human subjects or participants in any research study is imperative (Orb, Eisenhauer and Wynaden, 2001).

On the basis of ethical imperatives, the researcher sought permission to conduct the study and participants' confidentiality and privacy were observed. This was achieved by clarifying the objectives of the research right from the start and protecting respondents' personal identities by using code names.

## 3.10 CONCLUSION

The study falls within the realm of exploratory research, as it attempted to assess some relatively new SED programmes with little information available on its performance and outcomes. As reported earlier, the aim of the research was to assess the implementation of SAFCOL's SED programme in the Vhembe District with a view to determining its contribution to community development in this area, which remains characterised by relatively high levels of poverty and unemployment.

In undertaking this assessment, the study utilised qualitative interviews to determine how the people of Vhembe District feel about SAFCOL's SED initiatives which form part of the government's contribution to sustainable development in this area. By utilising the qualitative approach, the researcher was able to elicit the views and experiences of local

communities regarding the nature and quality of the SED projects provided by SAFCOL in this area.

# CHAPTER FOUR

# PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

## 4.1 INTRODUCTION

While the previous chapter detailed the qualitative research methodology adopted by the study, Chapter Four presents the data on the contribution of SAFCOL to sustainable livelihoods in the Vhembe District of Limpopo Province. The data is presented in accordance with the three research questions presented in Chapter One:

1. What are the experiences of the Vhembe community regarding SAFCOL's Beekeeping, Tshakhuma Nursery and Timber Frame Structures projects in relation to sustainable development?
2. How well do these projects respond to community needs in relation to poverty alleviation, skills transfer, job creation and small business development?
3. What can be done to improve the implementation of SAFCOL's SED projects in the Vhembe District Municipality?

The presentation of findings is preceded by situational analysis.

## 4.2 SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

The Vhembe District Municipality was established in the year 2000 under the Local Government Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998. The Municipality has been classified as a category C, grade 4 municipality by the Municipal Demarcation Board in terms of Section 4 of the Local Government: Municipal Structures Act, 1998 (VDM: Annual Report 2010/2011). The Vhembe District Municipality is largely rural and the households are mostly headed by females. The males migrate to the

urban areas to find work. The area is faced with infrastructural backlogs for water, sanitation and electricity which impact negatively on the health of these communities. The poor road infrastructure negatively influences reasonable response times for vehicles such as ambulances, mobile clinics and police vehicles (VDM: Annual Report 2010/2011).

The governance for Vhembe District is both traditional chieftainship and elected local government. The District relies on subsistence farming which is mostly dependent on rain-fed agricultural activities. The District has a high unemployment rate of almost 24%; the Deprivation Index is high at 3.6%; and 12% of households live on an annual income below R4,800 or less than R400 per month. About 57% of the population does not have formal education, 9% has primary education, 20% has secondary education and only 3% has tertiary education (Community Survey, 2007).

Given this situation, the study was interested in determining SAFCOL's contribution to sustainable livelihoods in the Vhembe community. The data was obtained from six villages in the Vhembe area: Levubu, Muledane, Maranzhe, Murangoni, Muzhenge and Witvlag. These areas were chosen because they had already implemented some of SAFCOL's SED projects. The sets presented here reflect the views of management, programme officials and community members concerning delivery of SAFCOL's SED projects in Vhembe. The questions and responses are presented below.

### 4.2.1 Community Experience on SED Projects

As described by Jones (1995), the community includes both beneficiaries and working partners, that is, the people left in the area when the project ends. Based on this definition, the study targeted beneficiaries and local people serving on SED projects. Their inputs were needed to determine the extent to which local people had benefited, or otherwise, from

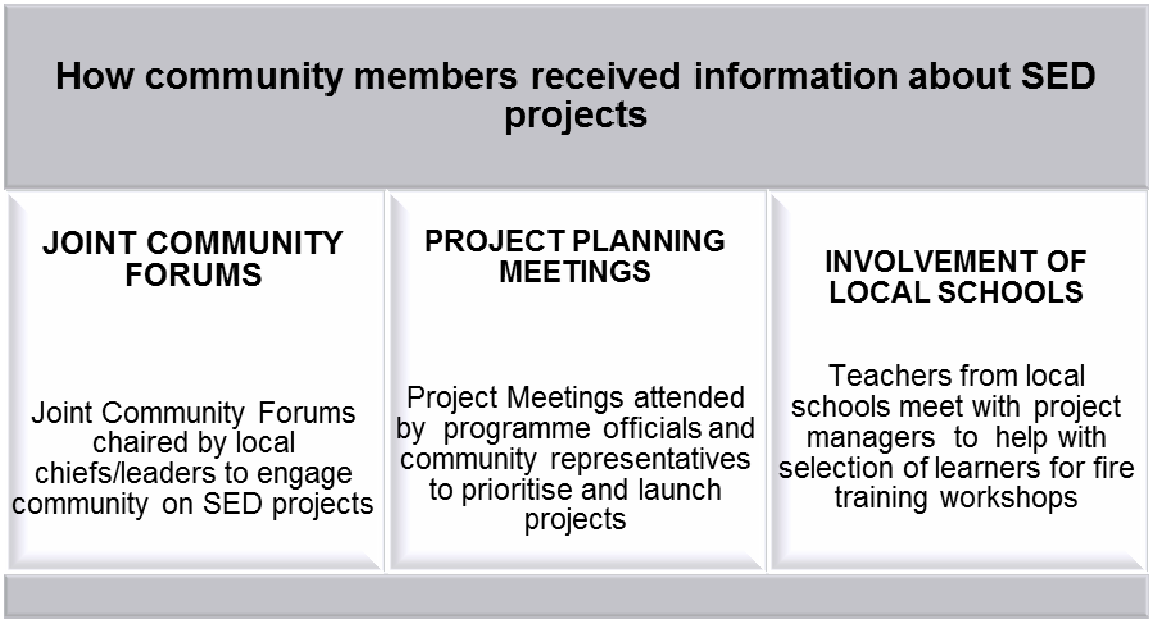
SAFCOL's SED projects. As with the other categories of respondents, this group was assigned code names ranging from C1 to C10. Coding was necessary to protect respondents' real identities in line with their right to privacy, safety and voluntary participation. Their inputs and comments are presented and explained below.

**(i) Knowledge of SED projects:**

In this context, knowledge is used to denote awareness. Many of the respondents seemed aware of SED projects, although in varying degrees. Most of them learnt about these projects through the community development forums, which enabled local communities to work with SAFCOL project managers to identify and agree on development needs in each area. A respondent from the community confirmed knowledge of existing projects as follows: "Yes they are beekeeping project: experiential and theoretical training on beekeeping, business management, etcetera; while the Tshakhuma Nursery provides experiential and theoretical training on growing vegetables in hydroponic tunnels" (Interview, December 2013).

At the Joint Community Forum SAFCOL invited teachers to select children who live close to the plantation to attend a fire-fighting course. The aim is to educate young children on fire-fighting. In addition, SAFCOL paid for the transportation and for a feeding scheme for children. Project meetings were held in all target areas with participating residents providing advice on SAFCOL projects. This was disputed by residents from Muledane, Witvlag and Levubu (Interview, December 2013). Based on this finding, the sources of information on SED projects are given in Figure 2 below.

**Figure 2: Sources of information on SED projects**




Source: Own

As shown in Figure 2, community members became aware of SED projects through the Joint Community Forums which were addressed by local Chiefs. In these forums, development objectives were identified, discussed and prioritised with community members. The second source of information was project meetings which were led by programme officials. The third source was school meetings attended by educators, project managers and community representatives, where teachers were advised to identify children for training in fire prevention and nature conservation in their respective schools.

Despite the sources cited in Figure 2, other respondents were still not satisfied with the amount of information they received about SED projects. It was indicated that knowledge of existing SED projects was limited due to poor road infrastructure, which made it difficult for SED project teams to reach remote areas. As a result, some community members were unaware of the SED services.

The finding on lack of information conflicts with the literature evidence in Chapter Two, which suggests that sustainable livelihood interventions should be underpinned by information sharing; consultation; joint-decision-making; and support for individual community initiatives (Wilcox, 1999). Lack of information on SED projects led to uncertainty and low community participation in areas like Maranzhe and Witvlag.

**(ii) Community Participation:**

Breuer (1999) states that involving communities in decision-making will lead to better decisions being made that are more appropriate and more sustainable because they are owned by the people themselves. The respondents differed on this issue. For example, beneficiaries from Muledane and Muzhenge confirmed that they had been invited to take part in SED projects, while respondents from Levubu and Witvlag were concerned about the lack of support and advice on available SED projects. However, other respondents hinted that it was the responsibility of community members to attend community forums to find out about available development projects. These differences in community participation confirm the point raised by Agrawal and Gibson (1999), that communities usually do not represent such homogeneous collective social units as most development projects or programmes tend to assume.

**(iii) Benefits of SED projects as perceived by the respondents:**

Many of the interviewees agreed that SED projects had brought many benefits for the Vhembe community. Examples included upgrading of school infrastructure, clinics and Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres. It was said that SAFCOL helped train caregivers to improve home-based care services in the Vhembe community. In addition, local people were trained and placed in SAFCOL's timber operations and SED projects. In this way, the company provided both skills and jobs to local people. One of the respondents summed up the benefits of the SED projects as follows:

> Yes. Rashitanga Primary School built with Timber Framed Structures by SAFCOL and a structure for meetings with parents. SAFCOL also built a home for orphans and vulnerable children in Muledane. SAFCOL sponsored computers to a high school. Built recreational facilities at Maranzhe and Murangoni villages which fall under the Tshivhase Community. They (SAFCOL) also built a library for the community. The library is being run by teachers. The books are from schools that were packed away in boxes and now all children in the community have access to these books (Interview, December, 2013).

Another respondent from the community also confirmed that there were fire projects and fire plantation education. A further initiative is the development of youth to work in the plantations in Muledane and Muzhenge. Training is offered by providing learnerships and internship programmes in furniture making, wood processing and boiler making. Youth apply for the training and are selected by SAFCOL. Once the training is complete, SAFCOL employs them to work and they earn a salary that equates to a living wage. This assists with local development of the youth. Learners from grades 9 to 12 and other graduates participate in the training. SAFCOL also offers ABET to people in the community to help them communicate (Interview, December, 2013). Table 6 below provides examples of SAFCOL contributions per village.

**Table 6: Examples of SED projects per area/village**

| Area/Village | Project Type |
|---|---|
| Levubu | Beekeeping (5 beehives) |
| Muledane | Timber Framed Structures and Orphanage |
| Maranzhe | Timber Framed Structures and recreation facility |
| Murangoni | Timber Framed Structures |
| Witvlag | Beekeeping (5 bee hives) |
| Tshivhase | Community library |
| Rashitanga Primary School | Built with Timber Framed Structures |
| Tshakhuma Nursery | Provides experiential and theoretical training on growing vegetables in hydroponic tunnels" |

Source: Own

Collectively these findings suggest that SAFCOL made contributions to sustainable development in various ways, including youth development, recreation, and provision of learning resources to schools which included books and computers. These findings are consistent with the point made by Byrne (1999), that education and training are pre-conditions to employment growth. Unless those issues are addressed, job readiness amongst local unemployed people will not significantly improve, and people from outside the district will pick up new jobs.

**(iv) Challenges /Constraints:**

Nearly all the interviewees acknowledged that there were problems in SED projects. Some complained about lack of consultation in certain projects, stating that in some cases community members were, "just told about these projects"; meaning that their inputs had not been factored into the planning process. For example, Levubu and Witvlag residents felt strongly that lack of consultation made people reluctant to participate in SED projects. By contrast, respondents from Maranzhe and Murangoni blamed the community for failing to own SED projects.

There was a strong feeling that some communities depended heavily on project managers to deliver SED projects without providing the necessary support, especially in monitoring and evaluation (M&E) activities. Disagreements about development priorities were also said to be a major problem, especially in Muledane, where some residents confused SED projects with municipal services. This finding illustrates how lack of consultation can hurt development projects at community level. One respondent from Muledane observed that,

> There should be more awareness of job creation with regard to working in the plantation. Finance is a problem. Though bursaries are offered, no registration fees are given upfront to the youth who are needy (Interview, December 2013).

**(v) Desired changes in SED projects:**

There was a high level of enthusiasm on this issue as most participants willingly came forward with pragmatic solutions which they felt could improve delivery of SED projects in their respective areas. These are summarised below:

> The processing of the logs is over 50 kilometres away from the plantations. The factory should be close to the plantations as this would be more cost effective. Youth do not want to work far from where they live. The morale and interest of the youth will be uplifted if they see the production of the forestry products close to their communities, and will encourage them to be interested in the work. The trucks have trailers that are 20 metres long and transport the logs to the factories over 50 kilometres away. This contributes to road accidents as well as damage to the roads. Therefore, it would be advisable to have the factories close to the plantations (Interview, December, 2013).

In part, the above finding highlights the unexpected outcomes of SAFCOL's community development projects in the Vhembe community, citing the damage to road infrastructure and the accidents caused by trucks transporting logs to the factories. Anderson (1998) and Cloete (2006) argue that public programmes are likely to have unintended consequences in society. This finding is not unique to the Vhembe community. Table 7 below provides examples of desired changes in SED projects.

**Table 7: Desired changes in SED projects**

| Desired changes in SED projects |
|---|
| • "Ensure that all community members are consulted"<br>• "Separate SED projects from politics"<br>• "Clarify roles and responsibilities in SED projects"<br>• "Let the community have a full say on project planning activities"<br>• "Change projects that do not meet community needs"<br>• "Provide additional support for staff working on SED projects"<br>• "Avoid duplication of projects as this puts pressure on the budget"<br>• "They (SAFCOL) need to spread the budget evenly to meet community needs"<br>• "Projects are not monitored, leading to damage or theft of new infrastructure" |

Source: Interview, December 2013

In addition to the issues presented in Table 7, it was suggested that career education in local schools should be undertaken to increase awareness of the opportunities offered by SAFCOL in the area. This information should be passed on to the learners. SAFCOL needs to market themselves by erecting signage, for example, "This structure was sponsored by SAFCOL" The headman of the community convenes *Imbizos* and SAFCOL representatives should be invited to these to create awareness in the community about all their projects (Interview, December, 2013). It appears

that this interviewee was pleased with what SAFCOL is doing to uplift their community.

Collectively, the data inputs in Table 7 above suggest that the majority of community members were optimistic about the SED projects, hence the need for improvement.

### 4.2.2 Senior Management perspective

This question was directed to project managers serving in SAFCOL's SED projects in the Vhembe Community. Answers were solicited from three respondents. Participants at this level were coded as Respondents A1, A2 and A3 to protect their identities and to simplify presentation of the research findings.

**(i) SAFCOL's role in promoting a sustainable livelihood:**

Respondent A1 indicated that SAFCOL was involved in a number of SED projects in the Vhembe District. According to this respondent, the projects included building and renovation of schools, infrastructure projects, and skills development for local youth. Similarly, Respondent A2 concurred with this respondent, saying that the Company was passionate about supporting local economic development through partnership with local communities. This was evident in the funding of beekeeping projects and environmental management projects which were run by communities themselves. Respondent A3 added that SAFCOL employed local people in all its projects, which gave them the opportunity both to earn income and to improve their skills levels.

**(ii) Alignment of SED projects with SAFCOL's strategic objectives:**

All three respondents agreed that the projects were directly linked to SAFCOL's strategic objectives. In support of this statement, Respondent A1 argued that the implementation of SED projects was consistent with

SAFCOLs' goal of building sustainable communities through empowerment, participation and involvement. Respondent A2 was very passionate about the fact that SAFCOL consulted and involved communities in the identification and prioritisation of their development needs. However, the same respondent also highlighted the fact that even though SAFCOL wished to help all communities, this was not possible due to the limited budget allocation for SED projects. As a result, some community members were dissatisfied with the slow pace of delivery in their villages. Respondent A3 stated that SAFCOL had a responsibility to contribute to job creation and poverty alleviation:

> In the absence of a proper social development strategy with objectives and targets it is very difficult to say. If one looks at the grander scheme of things, one could say that lives were impacted, but to what extent? (Interview, December 2013).

This finding suggests that even programme officials were aware that SAFCOL's contribution to sustainable livelihoods is not immune from challenges, meaning that a lot still needs to be done to promote sustainable development in the Vhembe community.

**(iii) Process followed to implement SED projects:**

A process denotes the steps that are followed to perform and/or accomplish a particular task or activity (Young, 2013). Programme officials were asked to indicate the steps involved in the execution of SED projects. The respondents differed on this issue. For example, respondent A1 indicated that before a project is implemented, it must first be approved and signed off by the Company's senior management. After this, project managers will then inform their teams of what needs to be done. Respondent A2 reported that projects are planned and implemented with the help of the community. According to this respondent,

"no project has ever been rolled out without the approval of the community".

By contrast, Respondent A3 offered a slightly different view, saying that the implementation of SED projects was hampered by the, "wide geographical spread of the communities", which made it difficult for the Company to meet their development needs with a limited budget. This respondent admitted that it was not easy for the Company to reach all communities in the Vhembe District, which caused some community members to be skeptical about the Company's SED projects in some areas, leading to "negativity".

This finding suggests that, though the approval of SED projects goes through the proper approval process, there are obstacles that hamper implementation

**(iv) Opportunities and challenges in SED projects:**

The aim of this question was to determine if there were any favourable or unfavourable conditions that impacted delivery of SED projects to the Vhembe community. According to one respondent, there is a good opportunity for SAFCOL to expedite planning and delivery of SED projects in the Vhembe community, "because the employees who work in these projects are part of the community and therefore understand the needs and expectations of their members". The biggest challenge in SED projects was the lack of skills and capital, especially in beekeeping and infrastructure projects. Another challenge was illiteracy, which made it difficult for SAFCOL to hand over projects to the community for implementation. One programme official summed up the challenge as follows:

> A lot still needs to be done to capacitate local communities with education and skills so that they can take full ownership of the

> development projects offered by SAFCOL in the area. Partnerships with the community are weak in some areas due to the fact that some of our people do not understand the value of participating in these projects (Interview, December 2013).

This finding suggests that community capacity-building efforts in SED projects are somewhat limited and thus require further improvement. As will be seen later, even the beneficiaries conceded that skills transfer and information sharing were lacking in some villages, for example, Muledane, Marhenze and Witvlag. This suggests weaknesses in the current capacity-building strategy used by SAFCOL in the area.

**(v) Resource allocation:**

Resources include human, material, technological and financial resources needed to support project implementation (Young, 2013). The respondents were asked if resources had been set aside to support the implementation of SED projects specifically in the Vhembe community. According to Respondent A1, SAFCOL spent R761,250 on SED projects in the above-mentioned areas: 47% of the budget was allocated for allowances; R485,250 was set aside for skills development; and R100,000 was used to conduct case study research in the Vhembe area (Interview, December, 2013). However, this respondent felt that this allocation was insufficient, given the wide scope and diversity of SED projects in the Vhembe community. Respondent A2 expressed concern that there were not enough qualified local people to run SED projects in the Vhembe community, adding that it was not easy to attract highly skilled people to these projects due to the relatively low levels of remuneration associated with community development projects generally. In contrast, Respondent A3 pointed out that the problem was not resource allocation *per se*, but rather the lack of monitoring on the ground. According to this respondent, some projects failed, not because they did not have budgets, but because they were not monitored properly. The respondent added that SAFCOL

provided infrastructure and equipment to support implementation of some projects, for example, classrooms, computers and agricultural tools and technical assistance for emerging timber growers. Despite these challenges, management representatives were confident that SED projects would succeed as the community was willing to co-operate with SAFCOL project managers.

### 4.2.3 Programme Official's Perspective

These questions were directed to managers of the SED projects and their teams, including personnel hired by SAFCOL and those representing the Vhembe community in the SED projects. Below is a summary of their perspectives of the implementation of these projects. The respondents were coded as B1 to B6.

**(i) Roles and Responsibilities:**

Roles and responsibilities provide clarity in terms of who does what and who reports to whom in the project environment (Burke, 2011). It was reported that programme officials played different roles in the implementation of SED projects. For example, while some were responsible for the day-to-day running of SED projects, others worked directly with communities to identify and agree on the next development goals and targets. Some officials assisted with hiring and training of staff to support project implementation. One of the respondents reported that due to the shortage of staff, some team members were compelled to work in different projects, and this sometimes diluted the quality of the services provided. In the case of ECD projects, leading roles were assigned to caregivers and operators of these centres as they were more conversant with the needs of their clients than the SAFCOL project team. Empowering owners of ECD centres and their staff was seen as part of SAFCOL's strategic objective to transfer knowledge and skills to local

people to ensure sustainable development. The following comments illustrate the experiences of programme officials in the SED project:

> I used to be the Senior Manager: Projects (Enterprise Development) responsible for the implementation of ED projects in the Vhembe District, for example the Beekeeping Project. In my current capacity as Manager, I implemented projects on behalf of the ED department, for example, Tshakhuma Nursery and Mulelu Macadamia Farm (Interview, December 2013).

> Even though I am not that closely involved with ED anymore, I do believe so. Projects are initiated based on identified needs analysis and approval by the JCF. No. The organisation firstly is going through a tough financial situation, which impacts on the resources available for project implementation for both ED and SED. Human resources are also wholly inadequate, which impacts on the number of projects that can be implemented as well as the quality of project management (Interview, December, 2013).

This finding highlights the fact that SED projects are experiencing difficulties in both human and financial resources. With regard to human resources, it appears that the current skills supply in SED projects does not match the demands of a wide range of SED projects offered by SAFCOL in the Vhembe community. Technical skills and project management skills were a major problem in the construction of timber frame structures.

**(ii) Key stakeholders and their role in SED projects:**

According to Hut (2009), a stakeholder is anyone who is managing the programme of work; working with the programme of work; directly or indirectly contributing to the programme of work; or affected by the programme of work or its outcomes. Stakeholder participation fails when it

is done too late or too early and with little clarity on project objectives and stakeholder roles and responsibilities. Stakeholder management helps managers assess and manage the environment around the planned programme and brings out the interests of the stakeholders and identifies potential conflicts to assign a level of risk or challenge to the programme success (Hut, 2009).

Based on the explanation above, programme officials were asked to mention the key stakeholders needed to implement SED projects in the Vhembe community. Management Respondent B1 reported that SAFCOL works with a wide range of stakeholders to deliver its SED programmes to local communities, including emerging farmers, environmental groups, NGOs, ECD centres and community members. From the various comments made, it was deduced that the key stakeholders are Joint Community Forums who perform needs analysis in the respective communities and approve projects. Projects are submitted to SAFCOL/KLF for implementation. The DBSA participated on a 50/50 funding basis with SAFCOL on the Beekeeping Project and developed the training needs analysis and facilitated training with service providers. Plantation management felt that sometimes the first line of engagement is with communities (Interviews, December 2013).

Although the rest of the group concurred with this view, some expressed disappointment about the lack of support from many of these stakeholders. The overall impression from this finding is that if all these stakeholders rendered practical support, such as funding, then SED projects would be enabled to meet sustainable development goals in the Vhembe community.

**(iii) Capacity building and participation:**

Programme officials reported that education and training had been used to build capacity and encourage community participation in Muledane and

Witvlag. In addition, respondents alluded to the fact that SAFCOL had also provided training to emerging farmers, women and youth on a number of projects, including business start-up training, producing honey and beekeeping. SAFCOL also recruited, trained and deployed local people to run SED projects and own the operations as part of its job creation strategy. According to one of the respondents, these efforts proved that SAFCOL had played a major role in transferring knowledge and skills to local people.

**(iv) Implementation problems:**

According to Cloete (2006), implementation means translating plans into action. Nearly all the respondents, including programme officials and beneficiaries, conceded that SED projects faced different challenges in the six villages targeted by the study. One such problem was the shortage of funds. Apparently, the R761,250 budget allocated for SED projects was insufficient and this delayed implementation of beekeeping and infrastructure development projects in the Vhembe community. Due to lack of information, some community members could not take advantage of the beekeeping project. Other respondents suggested that SAFCOL's timber processing factories were far from the community, forcing local people to travel 50 kilometres to work every day. The literature suggests that sustainable livelihood programmes and strategies should be localised to meet local development needs (Farington, Carney, Ashley and Turton, 1999).

A related problem was the shortage of technical and project management needed to run infrastructure projects. Due to this problem, some project managers had to oversee the implementation of more than 720 different projects in different regions, including the Vhembe area. Multiple projects posed a challenge in terms of monitoring and evaluation as managers did not have sufficient time to visit all the project sites regularly to establish whether they were meeting their performance targets as planned. Apart

from this, concerns were also raised about the failure of some communities to take responsibility for the infrastructure provided by SED projects, which resulted in vandalism and abuse of property, especially in the building and renovation of schools projects. This resulted in wastage of funds. One respondent complained about, "the trucks transporting logs to the factories 50 kilometres away", which he said caused many accidents and damaged the roads (Interviews, December 2013).

These findings negate the principles of sustainable development cited by Byrne (1999) in Chapter Two. According to this author, implementing a successful local development strategy entails defining the local territory; choosing a relevant time-scale of at least eighteen months and up to six years; attaining the commitment of those with the resources and responsibility for local and community development; identifying an agency or planning group responsible for the strategy; completing a strategic audit then developing actions that are appropriate to the local area; setting clear, attainable and measurable strategic goals; and building the capacity of individuals, organisations and development agent (Byrne, 1999).

**(v) Community support:**

The majority of respondents from Muledane, Marhenze and Levubu welcomed SED projects and were motivated to contribute to their implementation, but felt strongly that consultation and information were lacking in these areas. Community support for SED projects is illustrated by the Joint Community Forum, which performed needs analysis in the respective communities and approved SED projects. This positive response was, according to one respondent, due to the fact that a large number of people in the Vhembe community had been employed by SAFCOL. However, other respondents reported that there was a high level of negativity about SED projects in some parts of the Vhembe area due to unmet needs.

This finding suggests that members of the Vhembe community are willing to support and contribute to the implementation of SED projects, although this is sometimes undermined by limited communication and consultation efforts.

**(vi) Programme communications:**

Communication is the process of transmitting information from the sender to the receiver for a particular purpose (Burke, 2011). Programme officials admitted that although the intention was to make all community members aware of SED projects, this was hard to achieve because of geographical constraints, including long distances, poor road infrastructure and lack of public transport in some areas. These challenges constituted major barriers to the provision of SED projects in many parts of the Vhembe community. The majority of respondents cited public meetings and community development forums as the most effective methods of conveying SED information to the community. Other respondents hinted that project communications were very weak and required improvement. The implication of this finding is that the communication of SED projects to the community remains weak and fragmented, as illustrated by the case of Levubu and Witvlag, where residents complained about the lack of current information on SED projects.

**(vii) Monitoring and evaluation of SED projects:**

Programme officials were asked if SED projects had been monitored and evaluated in the participating villages. It was reported that in terms of SAFCOL's policy, each project manager and his/her team were responsible for tracking and measuring progress in their project. They were also expected to compile interim and annual reports with detailed information on the performance of their projects, including action plans to help improve outcomes. One programme official summarised the monitoring and evaluation function as follows:

> Projects are monitored, although the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system is inadequate. It would be beneficial if the Company could invest more resources (both financial and human) in developing a proper M&E system (Interview, December, 2013).

On the other hand, however, some respondents indicated that M&E efforts were inadequate and that in some situations community members had not been trained on how to monitor SED projects. As a result, it was difficult for SAFCOL to gain insight as to what was happening in all SED projects. Some projects were unsustainable simply because the community was not involved in M&E activities.

This finding negates the people-centred approach which underpins the implementation of sustainable livelihoods (Carney, 1999; Krantz, 2001). Kuye (2006) emphasises that M&E activities should be strengthened to ensure accountability and improved outcomes in development interventions.

**(viii) Progress in SED projects:**

In spite of the challenges mentioned above, it was generally agreed that the Vhembe community had benefited from the SED projects. Of significance was the infrastructure development cluster, which did good work in the renovation of schools, supply of new classrooms and establishment of early childhood development centres (ECDs). The researcher was shown pictures of these achievements. Some of these projects were labour-intensive and thus provided great opportunities for women, youth and unemployed men to earn income needed to support their families. Table 8 below provides examples of the contributions that SAFCOL made to sustainable development in the Vhembe community.

**Table 8: Progress in SED projects**

| Success stories |
|---|
| • "Rashitanga Primary School was built with Timber Framed Structures by SAFCOL"<br>• "SAFCOL built recreational facilities at Maranzhe and Murangoni villages which fall under the Tshivhase Community, and a structure for meetings with parents"<br>• "SAFCOL also built a library for the community"<br>• "Youth training was done on fire prevention, wood processing and boiler making"<br>• "After training, local youth are hired by SAFCOL to work in its timber production factories"<br>• "SAFCOL pays for children's transport and feeding scheme"<br>• "SAFCOL also built a home for orphans and vulnerable children in Muledane"<br>• "SAFCOL sponsored computers to a high school" |

Source: Interviews, December 2013

**(ix) Suggestions for improvement:**

A number of interesting suggestions were put forward to help improve the planning, execution and monitoring of SED projects in the Vhembe community. These included the following: communities had to be more involved in M&E activities; local NGOs had to lead the implementation process since they had sound knowledge of local cultures and people's development needs; growing demand for SED projects had to be supplemented with a reasonable increase in budget allocations to ensure the sustainability of SED projects in all areas; and, finally, manpower had to be increased to expedite delivery of SED projects in all parts of the Vhembe community. Collectively, these suggestions show that the majority of respondents wanted to see greater improvements in the implementation of SED projects in this community.

## 4.3 EMERGING THEMES

Based on the discussion of the findings above, the following themes can be identified: community experience on SED projects; contribution to job creation, skills development and poverty alleviation, and comparison of the perspectives of management, programme officials and beneficiaries. These themes are considered in more detail in Chapter Five.

## 4.4 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Community experiences on SED projects varied across the six villages in the Vhembe area. For example, although Levubu and Witvlag had five beekeeping projects respectively, there was a strong feeling that funding and support were lacking.

With regard to the Timber Framed Structures projects in Maranzhe, Muledane and Murangoni, it was felt that lack of project management skills and M&E skills tends to hinder implementation of these initiatives. Most respondents were satisfied with SAFCOL's school renovation and feeding scheme projects.

SAFCOL management and programme officials conceded that there were difficulties in promoting sustainable livelihoods in the Vhembe community. These included tight budgets; the inability of some community members to monitor and own SED projects; the wide and diverse scope of SED projects which affected M&E; and the shortage of qualified staff.

Despite these challenges, opportunities exist to improve the implementation of SED projects in the Vhembe community. These include the willingness of community members to participate in SED projects, and the fact that SAFCOL hired local people to run the projects, as illustrated by the Nursery project.

The findings largely suggest that SAFCOL is making a meaningful contribution to sustainable livelihoods in the Vhembe community, especially if one considers initiatives such as the low-cost housing scheme (Timber Framed Structures); ABET initiatives and the skills development programme which produced 251 learners in 2012-2013. Chapter Five analyses these findings to establish their implications for SAFCOL's efforts to promote sustainable livelihoods in the Vhembe community.

# CHAPTER FIVE

# ANALYSIS AND INTEPRETATION OF FINDINGS

## 5.1 INTRODUCTION

While chapter four reported the findings, chapter five examines and analyses the findings to determine SAFCOL's contribution to sustainable livelihoods in the Vhembe community. A primary objective of this chapter is to establish whether the Vhembe community is benefiting from SED projects through job opportunities, education and skills development, and to indicate whether management, officials, beneficiaries and government share their views and perceptions about these projects in this area. Table 9 below shows how the analysis has been aligned with the three broad research questions to ensure consistency and logic in the discussion.

**Table 9: Analysis framework**

| Research question | Associated theme |
|---|---|
| 1. What are the experiences of the Vhembe community regarding SAFCOL's Beekeeping, Tshakhuma Nursery and Timber Frame Structures projects in relation to sustainable development? | Beneficiaries' Experience on SED projects |
| 2. How well do these projects respond to community needs with regard to poverty alleviation, skills transfer, job creation and small business development? | Contribution to job creation, poverty alleviation, skills development and social cohesion |
| 3. What can be done to improve implementation of SAFCOL's SED projects in the Vhembe District Municipality? | Comparison of the perspectives of management, programme officials, government and beneficiaries |

Source: Own

## 5.2 ANALYSIS OF KEY THEMES

### 5.2.1 Beneficiaries' Experiences

Broadly, implementation means the process of transforming inputs into outputs or translating plans into action (Anderson, 1998; Cloete, 2005). Based on the data inputs and insights derived from Chapter Four, the analysis in this section will cover the following thematic issues: compatibility between SAFCOL's strategic objectives and SED projects; capacity needs; roles and responsibilities for SED projects; successes and failures, co-ordination; and monitoring and evaluation.

As indicated in Chapter Three, the study also targeted community members (beneficiaries) for information, with a view to obtaining their assessment of the SED projects provided by SAFCOL in the Vhembe District. To achieve this goal, the analysis will examine critical indicators such as awareness, access, consultation, participation, empowerment, accountability, and ownership. These issues are important in development contexts as they highlight the extent to which local communities are involved in promoting and supporting their own development.

#### 5.2.1.1 Knowledge of SED projects

The results revealed that community awareness about SED projects was relatively weak in some villages, namely Muledane and Witvlag, due to lack of relevant and current information about these projects. This suggests that programme communications did not reach all community members in the Vhembe district. This in turn undermined community participation in SED projects.

To some extent, this finding suggests that the communication strategy used by SAFCOL to inform the Vhembe community is not effective and

therefore requires significant improvement to increase awareness about SED projects and coverage, especially in more remote areas.

The finding on lack of information about SED projects continues with the view held in the literature that sustainable livelihood interventions should be based on proper sharing of information and resources with local communities to ensure that they take full ownership of these initiatives (Krantz, 2001; Carney, 1999).

#### 5.2.1.2 Access to SED projects

One of the key findings of the study was that access to SED projects was a serious challenge for some community members due to geographical constraints; for example, poor road infrastructure and lack of public transport compels many people to travel long distances on foot in order to reach SED projects. Another example was that the timber factories were 50 kilometres away from the community, which meant more travelling costs for local staff and job seekers, particularly the youth.

Lack of access to development services is not unique to the Vhembe community. An evaluative study conducted by Farrington, Carney, Ashley and Turton (1999) on sustainable livelihoods in Pakistan and Zambia found that impediments to the alleviation of poverty lay in elite domination of access to resources and in limited access by the poor to public services. In Pakistan, sustainable livelihood programmes were hampered by power relations and exclusion of the poor from access to most capital resources, especially land.

The above finding suggests that even though efforts were made to try and provide SED projects in some areas, this could not be achieved due to lack of basic services from the local municipality. Given this, it can be

inferred that provision of basic services is needed to support the implementation of SAFCOL's SED projects.

#### 5.2.1.3 Consultation

According to Farington, et. Al. (1999) and Swanepoel and De Beer (2006), and as reported in chapter four, some community members indicated that they were not consulted on SED projects. Therefore, they were not given the opportunity to express their views on how they want SED projects to be packaged and delivered in their respective areas. This sentiment was particularly strong in areas like Levubu, Muledane and Witvlag. However, this point was disputed by other members of the community from Marhenze, who accused their fellow members of undermining development efforts because some communities did not attend joint community forums. These forums played a major role in the identification and prioritisations of development needs in SED projects. The discrepancies in consultation could mean that proper consultation channels were not followed, for example, the consultation could have been more effective if it had involved local leaders in all areas.

#### 5.2.1.4 Participation

The literature (Byrne, 1999; Chambers, 1993), suggests that development does not work for people unless it is conceived and realised by them. This bottom-up approach is the essence of participatory or people-centered development. Breuer (1999) supports this view and argues that community participation promotes efficiency, effectiveness and equity in the total process of development, since involving communities in decision-making will lead to better decisions being made. These decisions are thus more appropriate and more sustainable as they are owned by the people themselves. At best, participation can reduce the risk of project failure and the cost of the project. The findings in Chapter Four revealed that some

community members did not contribute to the implementation of SED projects due to lack of information and consultation. In addition, some of these projects were located far from their residential areas, which increased travelling costs.

As mentioned in the literature review in Chapter Two, planning and implementation without community participation is likely to increase costs, stir up political unrest, contribute to lack of progress, and cause rifts in the community (Swanepoel and De Beer, 2008:71). According to these authors, the benefits of community participation are as follows: through participation both concrete and abstract needs of participants are met; participation encourages a learning process by allowing people to take the initiative from the beginning through contributing to needs identification and decision-making; it involves people at grassroots level and through this process provides an opportunity for ordinary people to participate in decision-making; and finally, participation leads to community building by encouraging leadership skills and brings about awareness among people about their own situation and their ability to address challenges.

Furthermore, Burns and Taylor (2000) provides useful criteria for determining whether community participation is meaningful. These include the history and patterns of participation; the quality of participation strategies adopted by partners and partnerships; the capacity within partner organisations to support community participation; the capacity within communities to participate effectively; and the impact of participation and its outcomes. The study found that efforts had been made to encourage community participation through the following methods as indicated in Table 10 below.

**Table 10: Methods of participation**

| Method | Practical meaning |
|---|---|
| Joint community forums | Project managers work with local leaders and communities to identify development priorities |
| Community development forums | Exchange of information and feedback on development issues linked to SED projects |
| Consultation meetings | Provide opportunities for people to talk about their needs and expectations regarding SED projects |
| Partnerships | Local schools and leaders became key partners in the implementation of SED projects |

Source: Own

Table 10 suggests four methods which were used to facilitate community participation in SED projects, namely joint community forums, community development forums, consultation meetings, and partnerships with local schools. Despite these efforts, there was a strong feeling that community participation was not working properly in some areas, such as Witvlag, Levubu and Marhenze, due to lack of communication.

#### 5.2.1.5 Empowerment

Within the context of this research, empowerment means creating an enabling environment where local communities are given the power, opportunities and resources to participate and contribute to their own development (Swanepoel and De Beer, 2008). The findings revealed that SAFCOL had contributed to community empowerment through a wide range of initiatives, including basic adult education, skills development and hiring of local people in timber processing factories. Children were chosen from schools in the Tshivhase community to attend fire-fighting courses. Training was provided to students in grades 9 to 12 from the Tshivhase community in the form of internships and learnerships. Furthermore, 251 local youth were trained in woodwork and boilermaking and hired in SAFCOL projects. Tshakhuma Nursery trained people on food security

and growing vegetables in hydroponic tunnels. On completion of the training, SAFCOL employed the youth. In addition SAFCOL provided ABET classes in Muledane to combat illiteracy.

Despite these efforts, there were gaps in enterprise development, especially regarding support for small businesses. Some respondents from Levubu and Witvlag reported that they had to abandon the beekeeping project due to lack of financial support.

While these empowerment initiatives are commendable, the literature (Krantz, 2001; Carney, 1999) suggests that empowerment efforts should also focus on establishing and/or strengthening existing, representative, community-based organisations to build capacity for community members to plan and implement priority development activities and in so doing, to provide communities with the means to develop their own principles and structures of democratic representation and governance. From the findings in Chapter Four, this aspect needs more improvement.

#### 5.2.1.6 Accountability and ownership

Given that SAFCOL adopted people-centered development strategies, it may be helpful to determine if community members played their part in SED projects. Given the comments and inputs of all the respondents, it appears that not all community members were involved in the implementation of SED projects. For example, beneficiaries from Muledane and Muzhenge confirmed that they had been invited to take part in SED projects, while respondents from Levubu and Witvlag were concerned about the lack of support and advice on available SED projects.

As noted in Chapter Four, some respondents admitted that in some areas, community members failed to monitor and protect the new infrastructure delivered by SED projects. This was the case in Muledane and Maranzhe.

Overall, these findings suggest that community experiences on SED projects varied across the six villages; meaning that the provision of these projects is uneven. The next section analyses the contribution of SED projects to job creation, skills development and poverty alleviation, as well as social cohesion.

### 5.2.2 Contribution to job creation, skills development, poverty alleviation and social cohesion

As indicated at the beginning of this chapter, this theme is linked to the second research question: How well do SED projects respond to the needs of the Vhembe community? This question aims to determine whether SED projects are contributing to employment creation, skills transfer and poverty alleviation, and Figure 3 below indicates the benefits derived from SED projects.

**Figure 3: Contribution to sustainable livelihoods**

| | |
|---|---|
| **EDUCATION** | ABET centres in Muledane to combat illiteracy; while the Employee Adult Education Training (EAET) targeted local staff in SED projects |
| **TRAINING** | 251 local youth trained in wood work and boiler making and hired in SAFCOL projects; Tshakhuma Nursery trained people on food security and growing vegetables in hydroponic tunnels |
| **JOB CREATION** | SAFCOL trained and hired local people to work in the timber plantations and factories; the Nursery also hired local people |
| **LOW-COST HOUSING** | The Timber Framed Structures Project provided easy access to affordable housing for poor households |
| **ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT** | Mulendane and Witvlag communities received training on fire prevention and nature conservation |

Source: Own, 2013

As shown in Figure 3 above, there are five key areas that demonstrate SAFCOL's contribution to sustainable livelihoods in the Vhembe community. Education and training efforts contributed to reduction of illiteracy, while skills development efforts enabled some community members to find jobs. SAFCOL's contribution to education and training is important because, as noted in the VDM Annual Report (2010-2011), about 57% of the population does not have formal education, 9% has primary education, 20% has secondary education, and only 3% has tertiary education.

Timber frame structures provided low-cost housing; labour-intensive projects created jobs for the youth; and SED projects promoted entrepreneurship/venture creation through the beekeeping project, enabling local people to earn an income to support their families.

Environmental management is also very important here as it resonates with the principles of sustainable development cited in Chapter Two, namely aligning development needs with nature conservation.

The above findings resonate with the literature in Chapter Two, which maintains that sustainable development is a human activity that nourishes and perpetuates the historical fulfilment of the whole community of life on earth (Bossil, 1999; Lee 2008). From a capital approach, sustainable development means development that ensures non-declining per capita national wealth by replacing or conserving the sources of that wealth, namely stocks produced, and human, social and natural capital (Pearce, 1998).

The results reflect that SAFCOL is contributing to sustainable livelihoods in the Vhembe community, although the quality of outcomes differed from one area to another. As defined by Chambers and Conway (1992), a livelihood comprises people, their capabilities and their means of living

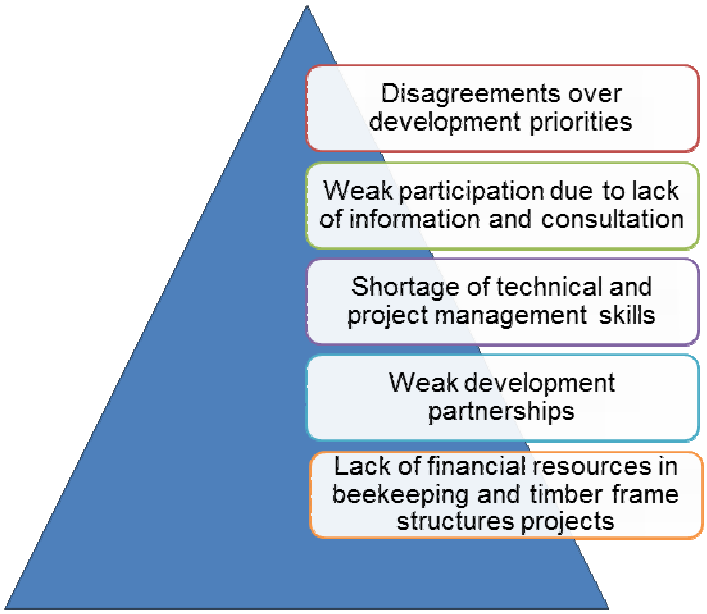
including food, income and assets. As mentioned in Chapter Four, one of the critical questions that the study sought to address was "How well do SED projects respond to the needs of the Vhembe community?" The research findings demonstrated that SAFCOL had contributed to sustainable livelihoods through a wide range of initiatives.

Similarly, it is important to note that there are certain issues which, if not adequately addressed, could undermine the sustainability of SED projects in the Vhembe community. These are considered below.

#### 5.2.2.1 Issues impacting sustainability of SED projects

The literature (Burke 2011; Young 2013) emphasises the need for project managers to pay attention to major issues that could undermine project operations. Young (2013) in particular observes that the purpose of issue management is to ensure that all risks that happen are resolved promptly to avoid or limit damage to the project. The study identified specific issues which, if not adequately addressed, could undermine SAFCOL's contribution to sustainable livelihoods in the Vhembe community. These are depicted in Figure 4 below.

**Figure 4: Variables impacting sustainability of SED projects**




Source: Own, 2013

Figure 4 above suggests that lack of financial resources impacted on the sustainability of beekeeping and timber frame structures projects. The budget for SED projects was R761,250 at the time of conducting the study. Linked to this was the shortage of technical and project management skills, weak development partnerships and community participation. One respondent from Witvlag indicated that some beneficiaries had withdrawn from the beekeeping project due to lack of financial support. In some cases salaries were paid late, which discouraged potential participants. Disagreement over development priorities in Marhenze and Muledane also affected delivery of SED projects in the Vhembe community.

#### 5.2.2.2 Partnerships

According to Mayers and Vermeulen (2002), partnerships are relationships and agreements that are actively entered into by two or more parties with the expectation of benefit. In development, the benefit of these partnerships is that companies can provide skills, technologies, resources

and access to markets that the community would otherwise be unable to obtain. Communities may aim for partnerships when they can make more money from fibre production, harvesting or processing than alternatives would provide, but lack the means to exploit these advantages without services that the company can provide.

The study found that the necessary partnerships needed to promote sustainable development in the Vhembe community were relatively weak. This undermined the implementation of SED projects in areas like Marhenze, Levubu and Muledane, resulting in poor community participation. This was largely attributed to lack of community participation and insufficient consultation. The finding on weak partnerships is corroborated by a study conducted by Coady and Galaway (1994) in Canada, which cited difficulties in establishing and maintaining inclusive partnerships in social and economic development. It was revealed that the disparate, often conflicting, interests of the potential partners and the lack of trust and acceptance among them weakened development partnerships. Based on this, their study concluded that local grassroots participation is essential in the initial stages of a partnership. Success lies in understanding the unique needs and expectations of the various stakeholders, and the overlap between social and economic objectives. Therefore, it appears likely that weak partnerships in SED projects meant that SAFCOL was unable to utilise existing social capital to improve the delivery of these interventions.

Having considered the contribution of SED projects to employment creation, skills development and poverty alleviation, attention is now focused on programme implementation to see if SED projects were executed as planned.

#### 5.2.2.3 Programme implementation

According to Anderson (1998), implementation means translating plans into action. Examining the implementation of SED projects is therefore appropriate here because this process involves deployment of financial and material resources. As a starting point, it is important to determine whether SED projects were linked to SAFCOL's strategic goals.

##### 5.2.2.3.1 Alignment between SED projects and strategic goals

The link between SAFCOL's strategic objectives and SED projects need to be tested as it has a direct impact on the success and sustainability of development interventions in the Vhembe community. Table 11 highlights the gaps between the organisation's strategic objectives and SED projects.

**Table 11: Link between strategic objectives and SED projects**

| Strategic objective | Findings |
|---|---|
| 1. Provide resources to support implementation of SED projects | Most participants conceded that the budget allocated for SED projects was limited, for example R761,250 in the 2013 financial year |
| 2. Form partnerships with local communities to support development efforts | Efforts to mobilise community support and participation were limited |
| 3. Empower local communities to participate in SED projects | Lack of information and consultation hindered community participation in some areas |
| 4. Ensure that SED projects contribute to sustainable livelihoods and social cohesion | SED projects did not reach all local communities, which caused dissatisfaction in some areas |

Source: Own

Table 11 depicts four broad strategic objectives relating to SED projects. The first objective concerns resource allocation. Evidence from the respondents suggests that this goal had been partially met, and the reason for this is that the budget allocated for SED projects in the Vhembe District is limited. Some project managers indicated that even if the budget is increased, the biggest challenge relates to how to deal with the wide scope and multiplicity of SED programmes.

The second strategic objective seeks to promote partnerships between the organisation and its stakeholders in order to support implementation of the SED projects in all target areas, including the Vhembe area (SAFCOL Report, 2011). In this regard, the study found that in some areas, community members were not aware of these opportunities and as a result, they were reluctant to participate in SED projects. Some participants suggested that local NGOs should lead the implementation of SED projects because they have a better understanding of local people's development needs.

The third strategic objective concerns empowerment of local people to participate in decision-making as well as implementation of SED initiatives. The data suggest that lack of information and consultation undermined community participation in SED projects.

The fourth objective is to ensure that SED projects contribute to sustainable livelihoods and social cohesion. It was found that not all communities were aware of SED projects. This caused dissatisfaction in some areas. For example, Levubu and Witvlag residents felt strongly that lack of consultation made people reluctant to participate in SED projects.

Collectively, these findings suggest that the link between the organisation's strategic goals and SED projects is relatively weak and requires prompt review to ensure that SED projects reach all communities

as planned. In the next section, attention is focused on the resources needed to implement SED projects.

#### 5.2.2.3.2 Resource Needs

According to Burke (2011), the term 'resources' refers to the human, material, financial, and technological inputs needed to support implementation of an organisation's programmes, projects and strategies; including soft issues such as organisational culture, norms and values, and institutional support. Table 12 below provides a break-down of the budget for SED projects. Table 13 below shows how resource needs affected the implementation of SED projects in the Vhembe community.

**Table 12: Budget allocation per project**

| Project | Budget allocation |
|---|---|
| Skills development | R485,250 |
| Allowances | R176,000 |
| Case study research | R100,000 |
| Total Allocation | R761,250 |

Source: Interview, December, 2013

As shown in Table 12 above, R485,250 was spent on skills development, while R176,000 went to allowances and R100,000 to research. Therefore, a total of R761,250 had been spent on SED projects at the time of conducting the study in the Vhembe community. As reported earlier, both programme officials and beneficiaries were concerned about the small size of the budget given the multiplicity of SED projects in the Vhembe community. The overall impression was that more financial resources were needed to support the beekeeping projects in Levubu and Witvlag.

**Table 13: How resource needs affect implementation of SED projects**

| Resource needs | Findings |
|---|---|
| Financial resources | Limited budgets caused many projects to be abandoned or put on hold indefinitely |
| Materials and equipment | SAFCOL did provide infrastructure services, although these were vulnerable to theft and abuse |
| Institutional support | SAFCOL was committed to SED projects but support from its partners was somewhat limited |
| Technology | Computers were being introduced and used to monitor project activities |
| Performance culture | In some areas, project teams and community members were willing to work together |
| Skills requirements | Illiteracy and lack of skills in some areas delayed implementation of SED projects |
| Buy in, support and ownership | In some areas, community members were willing to contribute to implementation of SED projects |

Source: Own

With regard to skills development opportunities, the SAFCOL Integrated Report (2012-2013) explains that, "Our skills-development strategy ensures employing the right people, in the right numbers, in the right places, and at the right time. To achieve this, the Learning and Development Unit provides different learning and skills development interventions. These include Employee Adult Education Training (EAET), internships and learnerships, community development programmes, leadership development programmes, and specific forestry-development programmes" *(*SAFCOL Integrated Report, 2012-2013).

Some of the respondents confirmed that they had received training in different job categories. The skills acquired from the training enabled them to find jobs within SAFCOL. According to the Integrated Report (2012-2013), a total of 251 unemployed youth participated in a number of skills development interventions between 2012 and 2013. Learners were

recruited from adjacent communities, land claimants, and from communities that SAFCOL has signed social compacts with. All the learners successfully completed the training and were deemed competent. The skills programmes offered are summarised in Table 14 below.

**Table 14: Examples of skills programmes offered**

| Skills programmes | Number of trainees enrolled |
|---|---|
| Furniture-making | 13 learners |
| Upholstery | 16 learners |
| Life Skills Course | 150 learners |
| Computer end-user training | 59 learners |

Source: SAFCOL: Integrated Report (2012-2013)

#### 5.2.2.3.3 Roles and responsibilities

Effective allocation of roles and responsibilities is central to successful implementation of projects, given the multiplicity of stakeholders involved in such endeavours (Young, 2013). The study revealed that most responsibilities for implementing SED projects were assigned to project managers who did not have enough staff to carry out those projects. In Marhenze, for example, some of the respondents felt that although they had received training in construction and building, they could not play a meaningful role in these projects due to limited opportunities for participation. Table 15 below provides examples of stakeholder roles and responsibilities in SED projects.

**Table 15: Stakeholder roles and responsibilities in SED projects**

| Stakeholder | Responsibility in SED projects |
|---|---|
| Joint Community Forums | Performs needs analysis in the respective communities, approves projects and submits projects to SAFCOL for approval. |
| Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA) | Participated on a 50/50 funding basis with SAFCOL on the Beekeeping Project; developed the training needs analysis and facilitated training service provision. |
| SAFCOL | Is the project sponsor and employer, i.e. provider of skills development and job opportunities and funding. |
| Vhembe community | Expected to participate and contribute to planning, implementation and monitoring of SED projects. |

Source: Interviews, December 2013

#### 5.2.2.3.3 Co-ordination

Co-ordination is needed to ensure effective implementation of projects. According to Mooney and Riley (2006), co-ordination is the unification, integration and synchronization of the efforts of group members, so as to provide unity of action in the pursuit of common goals. Co-ordination is achieved through the basic functions of planning, organising, staffing, directing and controlling. Therefore, co-ordination is critical in ensuring that multiple project activities are integrated and managed properly to ensure that they produce the desired outcomes.

Many of the respondents conceded that the wide scope of SED projects made it difficult for project managers to co-ordinate development interventions in the Vhembe district. An example was made about one project manager who had to deal with 720 different projects in different regions, including Vhembe. The lack of co-ordination was also illustrated by communications challenges in some areas, for example, Muledane, Levubu and Witvlag. Some interviewees from the community indicated that they were not informed about SED projects. Effective communication

is critical for interventions to succeed and the study found that this was lacking.

#### 5.2.2.3.3 Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) is critical in ensuring accountability, learning and continuous improvement in any project. As Swanepoel and De Beer (2006:71) correctly observe, it is only through M&E that it can be determined whether the initial plans have been put into practice and whether they are being carried out according to the plans. M&E ensures that plans are on target and the direction is correct, and suggests course changes when necessary, including any additional measures needed to improve performance and outcomes. Table 16 below summarises the results in this regard.

**Table 16: M&E Issues in SED projects**

| Requirements | Findings |
|---|---|
| M&E practice | Programme officials observed that M&E efforts were weak across projects due to lack of staff and poor road infrastructure |
| Community participation | Community members lacked knowledge and skills on M&E, which weakened participation |
| Follow-up on projects | There was a trend to rely on annual reports as tools to track progress on SED projects |
| Remedial measures | Response to problems was hampered by lack of funds |

Source: Interviews December 2013 and Own

The findings in Table 16 above suggest that M&E efforts in relation to SED projects was hampered by lack of M&E skills, lack of commitment and the limited involvement of the community. This finding conflicts with the point made by Carney (1999) and Kuye (2003), that beneficiaries should be at the forefront of the M&E process to ensure that development interventions

produce the desired outcomes. Weak M&E practice not only compromises the quality of outcomes but also makes it difficult to know exactly whether targets were met in SED projects in the Vhembe community.

#### 5.2.2.3.3 Opportunities and challenges

The findings in Chapter Four revealed several opportunities and challenges that affected the implementation of SED projects in the Vhembe community, and that these varied from one area to another. Challenges were more pronounced in remote areas where SED projects were hard to find due to severe geographical constraints. These are summarised in Table 17 and Table 18 below.

**Table 17: Opportunities**

| Opportunity | Implications for SED projects |
|---|---|
| Indigenous knowledge | Could be used to implement environmental management projects |
| Partnerships | Provide social capital needed to implement SED projects |
| Positive perceptions | Mitigate the risks of resistance and non-participation |
| Localisation | Creates jobs and learning opportunities for local people |

Source: Own

As shown in Table 17, indigenous knowledge can be harnessed in order to expedite the implementation of environmental management projects such as water management, nature conservation and subsistence farming to enable sustainable development in the Vhembe community. Local people have sound knowledge of their environment and therefore hold the key to sustainable use of the natural resources. Within this context, Bossil (1999) argues that societies and their environments change, technologies and cultures change, values and aspirations change, and a sustainable society must allow and sustain such change; that is, it must allow for continuous,

viable and vigorous development, which is what is meant by sustainable development.

SAFCOL has identified that it wants to achieve sustainable development through partnerships with local communities and non-governmental organisations. However, many of the interviewees felt that partnerships with local communities were weak and did not last in some areas. This affected the success and sustainability of some SED projects, for example the Beekeeping projects and Timber Framed Structures projects. Table 18 below summarises the challenges encountered in SED projects.

**Table 18: Challenges**

| Challenge | Implications for SED projects |
|---|---|
| Difficulty of accessing remote areas | Supply-side strategies need careful planning |
| Finding and retaining skilled personnel | Current recruitment practices need to be reviewed and improved |
| How to reconcile conflicting priorities | Prioritisation mechanisms must be reviewed |
| Dealing with rising demand for SED services | Demand forecasting needs more attention |

Source: Interviews, December 2013 and Own

Table 18 above highlights four challenges that impede the implementation of SED projects in the Vhembe community, including the difficulty of identifying appropriate SED projects, skills shortages, competing priorities and how to balance these with limited financial resources, and finally, how to deal with the rising demand for SED projects. From the perspective of management and programme officials, there is a need for SAFCOL to review its current funding arrangements in order to meet the development needs of the Vhembe community.

Looking at these results, it may be inferred that there are opportunities and challenges in the implementation of SED projects, and that this situation is not unique to SAFCOL. As indicated in Chapter Two, development is a complex and dynamic process representing diverse and sometimes conflicting interests and priorities. The next section compares and contrasts the views and perspectives of participants to determine how they felt about delivery of SED services in the Vhembe community.

### 5.2.3 Comparison of perspectives of management, programme officials, beneficiaries and the government

What do these findings reveal about the perspectives of SAFCOL management, programme officials, project managers, beneficiaries and the government regarding SED projects in the Vhembe community? Do these stakeholders feel the same way about SED projects in this area? Clearly, these questions justify the need to compare and contrast the views of the key stakeholders to establish whether they had the same experiences regarding the implementation of SED projects in the Vhembe community. This is presented in Table 19 below.

**Table 19: Comparison of stakeholder perspectives**

| Research questions | SAFCOL's perspective | Programme officials' perspective | Beneficiaries' perspective |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. What are the experiences of the Vhembe community regarding SAFCOL's Beekeeping, Tshakhuma Nursery and Timber Frame Structures projects in terms of | SED projects are being implemented, although challenges remain in many areas, especially with regard to funding | Progress has been made in the Nursery, Timber housing project, skills development and school renovation projects | Despite challenges, the community has benefited from Beekeeping projects, timber housing projects, Nursery and the youth and skills development programme |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| sustainable development? | | | |
| 2. How well do these projects respond to community needs in terms of poverty alleviation, skills transfer, job creation and small business development? | In some areas progress is hampered by lack of skills and commitment from the community, as exemplified by lack of participation in some areas | Efforts to align budget with SED projects remain weak and hampers SAFCOL's contribution to sustainable development in Vhembe | They are not enough, because some areas have not received funding for these projects |
| 3. What can be done to improve implementation of SAFCOL's SED projects in the Vhembe District Municipality? | Resource allocation for SED projects need to improve to fast-track implementation of these projects | Community participation and prioritisation of projects is needed to improve delivery of SED projects in Vhembe | Development opportunities must be brought closer to the community. Timber factories are far from the community |

Source: Interviews, December 2013 and Own

In examining Table 19, it may be inferred that the key stakeholders had different albeit complementary views regarding SAFCOL's contribution to sustainable development in the Vhembe community. On the whole, these findings suggest that nearly all the stakeholders recognise that, in spite of the difficulties, some community members have benefitted from SED projects.

### 5.3 Comparison of findings with Brundtland Commission on Environment and Development

The sustainable livelihoods concept was first introduced by the Brundtland Commission on Environment and Development in 1987 as a way of linking socio-economic and ecological considerations in a cohesive, policy-relevant structure. "A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stress and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, and provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for the next

generation; and which contributes net benefits to other livelihoods at the local and global levels and in the short and long term" (Chambers and Conway, 1992).

Based on the above, the research findings suggest that the goals of sustainable development have been partially met in the Vhembe District. On the positive side, youth skills development programmes, school renovation and the nursery project hold promise for the Vhembe community. However, challenges remain in job creation as timber processing plants are located some distance from the community. On the negative side, it seems that efforts to align spending and local development goals have been unsuccessful, as evidenced by abandonment of some projects in areas like Levubu.

## 5.4 SUMMARY

This summary is aligned to the three broad research questions above and reflects the perspectives of the Vhembe community, SAFCOL, programme officials and the government regarding SAFCOL's contribution to SD in the Vhembe community in Limpopo province.

From a community perspective, participants from Levubu, Muledane, Maranzhe, Murangoni, Tshakhuma, and Witvlag had different experiences of SED projects. Respondents from Tshakhuma were satisfied with the services from the Nursery, which taught them about food security and subsistence farming. This finding suggests that the responsiveness of SED projects to community needs differed from one area to another.

Community members involved in the Beekeeping projects in Levubu and Witvlag were concerned about the lack of funds and support, which resulted in some residents withdrawing from the project. Maranzhe and Murangoni residents appreciated the renovation of schools and feeding

schemes but felt strongly that community consultation was inadequate, which discouraged many residents from participating in SED projects.

From the perspective of programme officials, SAFCOL's contribution to sustainable livelihoods in the Vhembe community is illustrated by initiatives such as the recreational facilities at Maranzhe and Murangoni villages; the food security and environmental management projects; basic adult education and computerization of some schools in Muledane; and skills development which provided learnership opportunities to 251 unemployed youth between 2012 and 2013.

From a government perspective, sustainable development efforts should be mainstreamed with similar interventions in other sectors to realise cost-savings, synergies and congruence. This point is clearly emphasised in the NFSD (2008).

Collectively, the above perspectives suggest that SAFCOL has contributed to job creation, skills development and poverty alleviation in the Vhembe community, although the benefits varied from one village to another. For example, while the Tshakhuma Nursery and school renovation projects performed fairly well, the Beekeeping and Timber Framed Structures projects were hampered by limited funding arrangements. Conclusions and recommendations are presented in Chapter Six.

# CHAPTER SIX

# CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## 6.1 INTRODUCTION

As reported in Chapter One, the study was intended to determine SAFCOL's contribution to sustainable development in the Vhembe district of Limpopo Province, given the generally high levels of poverty and unemployment in this area. To achieve this, the study, focused on the experiences of the Vhembe community regarding SAFCOL's Beekeeping, Nursery and Timber Frame Structures projects; the responsiveness of these projects to the development needs of the Vhembe community; and what could be done to improve implementation and sustainability of these projects in this community. On this basis, Chapter Six addresses the conclusions and recommendations of the study.

## 6.2 CONCLUSIONS

The analysis in Chapter Five revealed that members of the Vhembe community had positive and negative experiences of SED projects and these varied between Levubu, Marhenze, Muledane and Witvlag. In principle, the Vhembe community welcomed the projects but wanted to see significant improvements in project communications, partnerships, funding arrangements, and job creation for the youth.

Access to SED projects was a challenge for Muledane and Marhenze residents. Timber production factories were 50 kilometres away from the community, which increased travelling costs and made it difficult for local youth to access job opportunities in SED projects. This finding runs contrary to the sustainable livelihood approach discussed in Chapter Two,

which emphasised that easy and affordable access to services is essential for the success of development interventions, particularly in rural areas.

The analysis also suggests that community consultation and engagement processes were not fully utilised to harness the social capital needed to support implementation of SAFCOL's Beekeeping projects, particularly in areas like Levubu, Marhenze and Witvlag.

With respect to resource allocation, it appears that the current funding mechanism is insufficient to support infrastructure development projects, such as timber framed structures and school renovations. This challenge was confirmed by senior management representatives and programme officials during the interviews.

With the exception of the Tshakhuma Nursery project, delivery of infrastructure development projects was inadequate because of the lack of technical and project management skills. This was particularly true in areas like Muledane, Maranzhe and Murangoni, where some respondents complained about slow delivery of SED projects.

With regard to stakeholder roles and responsibilities, it appears that local municipalities were not fully incorporated into SED projects. This would have strengthened the capacity needed to deliver SED projects in the Vhembe community. This suggests gaps in the planning of SED projects in this area.

The analysis also revealed that project communications were weak in some areas, as evidenced by lack of effective community consultation in areas like Witvlag and Murangoni. This finding negates SAFCOL's goal of promoting sustainable livelihoods through sound partnerships with local communities.

The broad scope of SED projects made it difficult for project managers to co-ordinate planning, implementation and monitoring of activities across the villages. This compromised accountability and the quality of SED projects in the Vhembe community, as there was no credible and sufficient M&E data to measure outcomes and/or results.

With regard to opportunities, many beneficiaries showed willingness to participate, learn and contribute to the implementation of SED projects. On the negative side, concerns were raised about the failure of some communities to monitor and protect the new infrastructure created by SED projects, and this to some extent reversed the gains made in other areas.

Although not evenly spread across the Vhembe community, it appears that SED projects are contributing to employment creation, skills development and poverty alleviation in this area. The Tshakhuma Nursery project in particular, which trained community members on growing vegetables in hydroponic tunnels, is a positive example of SAFCOL's contribution to sustainable livelihoods as it taught local people how to use subsistence agricultural methods to promote food security and environmental management in the Vhembe community. Food security is crucial as the Vhembe community is characterised by a 24% unemployment rate (VDM Annual Report, 2010/2011). In this way, SAFCOL has also contributed to the government's Food Security Programme in this area. The skills development programme has also seen positive outcomes, and has helped young people acquire skills and find jobs in SAFCOL's wood processing factories, although these are located 50 kilometres from the community.

## 6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

From the preceding discussion, it appears that the implementation of SED projects is hindered by conflicting development needs, weak programme

communications, lack of capacity and financial resources, illiteracy, and unsatisfactory monitoring efforts on the ground. The following steps are recommended to help mitigate these challenges.

### 6.3.1 Prioritise SED projects to meet unique community needs

The majority of participants expressed concerns about the lack of SED projects in some areas of the Vhembe community, while others noted that the budget resources allocated for these projects annually were insufficient. Given this, it may be prudent for SAFCOL to work with community representatives to prioritise and agree implementation time-frames for SED projects. An incremental approach to implementation would help mitigate staff shortages and monitoring problems.

### 6.3.2 Scale up project communications to improve awareness and access

The research findings revealed that some members of the Vhembe community were unable to gain access to SED projects due to lack of information. This suggests that the current strategy used to communicate these projects to local communities is either weak or ineffective. Thus, a multi-media strategy along with road shows would ensure that local people gain access to SED projects in a timely manner.

### 6.3.3 Improve implementation process by capacitating local CBOs and NPOs

Owing to their sound knowledge and experience in dealing with community development, NGOs are an effective vehicle that could be used to expedite delivery of SED projects in the Vhembe community. To do this, they need adequate education and training on basic project management, conflict resolution and community communications.

### 6.3.4 Recruit more staff locally to meet growing demand for SED projects

One of the key findings of the study was that in some cases, the implementation of SAFCOL's SED projects was hampered by shortage of human capacity. This is particularly true for remote villages situated far from the project site. To address this problem, it would be prudent for SAFCOL to hire, train and deploy more people to drive the implementation of the SED projects in the Vhembe area.

### 6.3.5 Review and adjust current monitoring and evaluation system

From the research results, it is evident that current monitoring systems are not producing the desired outcomes. Lack of sufficient and credible M&E information makes it difficult for SAFCOL to determine whether all SED projects are meeting the needs and expectations of the Vhembe community. To address this challenge, it may be necessary to review and improve the current M&E system to ensure that project managers, programme personnel and beneficiaries work together to monitor and evaluate the work being done in the community.

### 6.3.6 Benchmark SED projects to improve delivery and outcomes

SAFCOL is in a better position to benchmark its SED interventions against those of other state-owned companies such as Eskom and Transnet, as they also run similar development initiatives in rural areas. To yield real value, such benchmarking would need to focus on critical areas such as project processes; human resource management, and community participation. Lessons from this exercise may be used to enhance delivery of SED projects in the Vhembe area.

### 6.3.7 Link SED interventions with the organisation's business strategy

During the interviews, project managers and their teams conceded that the annual budget allocated for SED projects was inadequate and as a result, the company (SAFCOL) could not effectively address the development needs of the Vhembe community. This could be an indication that SAFCOL's growth strategy is not compatible with its social responsibility programmes, resulting in skewed allocation of financial resources for SED projects. Remedial steps include proper financial forecasting to strike a balance between SAFCOL's strategic objectives and SED projects, and regular market research to determine demand and supply issues in relation to community development.

## 6.4 FUTURE RESEARCH

As with all research projects, this study had a limited scope, with particular emphasis on the implementation of SAFCOL's SED projects in the Vhembe District of Limpopo Province. This report does not provide a full picture of whether SED projects in other provinces are meeting the goals of sustainable development. To address this knowledge gap, it may be necessary to conduct an evaluative study involving different regions in order to assess the impact of SAFCOL's SED projects on local communities. To yield value, impact evaluation would have to consider economic, social, geographic, demographic and financial indicators. This would provide clarity as to whether local communities are benefiting from SAFCOL's SED programmes.

In conclusion, the lack of resources and skills would appear to retard the implementation of SED projects in the Vhembe community. Despite these challenges, opportunities exist to promote a sustainable livelihood in this area. These include the willingness of community members to participate

in development projects; success stories from other SED initiatives, for example infrastructure development which has produced positive results in building and renovation of schools, early childhood development centres, clinics and community halls. SAFCOL can leverage these opportunities to improve planning and execution of SED projects.

The critical question of the study was “What contribution is SAFCOL making to sustainable livelihoods in the Vhembe community, given the challenges of unemployment, poverty and illiteracy in this area”? Taking into consideration all of the above, it may be concluded that SAFCOL to a certain extent is making a contribution to sustainable livelihoods in the Vhembe community. However, with increased capacity, resources and proper M&E systems the contribution could be significantly scaled up.

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# APPENDIX

## INTERVIEW SCHEDULES

### A. COMMUNITY EXPERIENCE ON SED PROJECTS

1. Do you know of any community upliftment project sponsored by SAFCOL in your area? Comment.

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2. Have you been invited to take part in community development projects in your area? Explain.

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3. From your experience, are community development projects helping to improve people's lives in your area? Explain with examples.

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4. Are there any issues that you think affect or hinder implementation of community development projects in your area. Discuss.

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5. What changes or improvements would you like to see in the implementation of community development projects in your area? Comment.

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**B. TOP MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVE**

1. What role does SAFCOL play in SED particularly in the Vhembe area in Limpopo? Explain with examples.

2. Are SED projects aligned with SAFCOL's strategic objectives? Give reasons.

3. What steps, if any, have been taken to ensure successful implementation of SAFCOL's Beekeeping, Tshakuma Nursery, and Timber Frame Structures in Vhembe District Municipality specifically?

4. What are the opportunities and challenges impacting SAFCO's Beekeeping, Tshakuma Nursery, and Timber Frame Structures projects in the Vhembe community? Explain.

5. Are human, material and financial resources being provided to support role out of the Beekeeping, Tshakuma Nursery, and Timber Frame Structures in this area? Explain with examples.

**C. PROGRAMME OFFICIALS' PERSPECTIVE**

1. What is your role in the Vhembe social development project? Give examples.

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2. Who are the key stakeholders in SAFCOL's social development projects and do they play their part in these initiatives? Give reasons.

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3. Are local communities capacitated to participate meaningfully in the implementation of these projects? Explain with examples.

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4. Are there any issues or problems that hinder implementation of SAFCOL's social development projects in the Vhembe District specifically? Discuss.

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5. Does the project enjoy support from the Vhembe community? Explain.

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6. From your experience, are there sufficient human, financial and material resources to support implementation of social development projects in the Vhembe District? Give reasons.

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7. In your view, are social development efforts well communicated to local communities in this area? Explain.

8. Are social development projects monitored, and does the M&E system work? Give reasons.

9. What progress, if any, has made in realizing SAFCOL's social development objectives in the Vhembe area specifically? Explain with examples.

10. Do you have any suggestions for improvement? Comment.

**D. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Please provide any relevant information that you think may improve understanding of the community development projects offered by SAFCOL in your area.